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## Preface to the Annotated Edition

SINCE this book was first published in the beginning of 1883, I have come into possession of much additional information bearing on many of the problems dealt with. But I am glad to say that such later teaching only reveals incompleteness in my original conception of the esoteric doctrine – no material error so far. Indeed I have received from the great Adept himself, from whom I obtained my instruction in the first instance, the assurance that the book as it now stands is a sound and trustworthy statement of the scheme of Nature as understood by the initiates of occult science, which may have to be a good deal developed in the future, if the interest it excites is keen enough to constitute an efficient demand for further teaching of this kind on the part of the world at large, but will never have to be remodelled or apologized for. In view of this assurance it seems best that I should now put forward my later conclusions and additional information in the form of annotations on each branch of the subject, rather than infuse them into the original text, which, under the circumstances, I am reluctant in any way to alter. I have therefore adopted that plan in the present edition.

As conveying an indirect acknowledgement of the general harmony to be traced between these teachings and the recognized philosophical tenets of certain other great schools of Indian thought, I may here refer to criticisms on this book, which were published in the Indian magazine the *Theosophist* in June, 1883, by "a Brahman Hindu." The writer complains that in interpreting the esoteric doctrine, I have departed unnecessarily from accepted Sanskrit nomenclature; but his objection merely is that I have given unfamiliar names in some cases to ideas already embodied in Hindu sacred writings, and that I have done too much honour to the religious system commonly known as Buddhism, by representing that as more closely allied with the esoteric doctrine than any other. "The popular wisdom of the majority of Hindus to this day," says my Brahman critic, "is more or less tinged with the esoteric doctrine taught in Mr Sinnett's book misnamed 'Esoteric Buddhism,' while there is not a single village or hamlet in the whole of India in which people are not more or less acquainted with the sublime tenets of the Vedânta philosophy... The effects of Karma in the next birth, the enjoyment of its fruits, good or evil, in a subjective or spiritual state of existence prior to the reincarnation of the spiritual monad in this or any other world, the loitering of the unsatisfied souls or human shells in the earth (Kâma loca), the pralayic and manvantaric

periods... are not only intelligible, but are even familiar to a great many Hindus, under names different from those made use by the author of 'Esoteric Buddhism.'" So much the better – I take leave to rejoin – from the point of view of Western readers, to whom it must be a matter of indifference whether the esoteric Hindu or Buddhist religion is nearest to absolutely true spiritual science, which should certainly bear no name that appears to wed it to any one faith in the external world more than to another. All that we in Europe can be anxious for, is to arrive at a clear understanding as to the essential principles of that science, and if we find the principles defined in this book claimed by the cultured representatives of more than one great Oriental creed as equally the underlying truths of their different systems, we shall be all the better inclined to believe the present exposition of doctrine worth our attention.

In regard to the complaint itself, that the teachings here reduced to an intelligible shape are incorrectly described by the name this book bears, I cannot do better than quote the note by which the editor of the *Theosophist* replies to his Brahman contributor. This note says: – "We print the above letter as it expresses in courteous language, and in an able manner, the views of a large number of our Hindu brothers. At the same time it must be stated that the name of

‘Esoteric Buddhism’ was given to Mr Sinnett’s latest publication, not because the doctrine propounded therein is meant to be specially identified with any particular form of faith, but because *Buddhism* means the doctrine of the *Buddhas*, the Wise i.e. the ‘Wisdom Religion.’” For my own part I need only add that I fully accept and adopt that explanation of the matter. It would indeed be a misconception of the design which this book is intended to sub-serve, to suppose it concerned with the recommendation, to a *dilettante* modern taste, of Old World fashions in religious thought. The external forms and fancies of religion in one age may be a little purer, in another a little more corrupt, but they inevitably adapt themselves to their period, and it would be extravagant to imagine them interchangeable. The present statement is not put forward in the hope of making Buddhists from among the adherents of any other system, but with the view of conveying to thoughtful readers, as well in the East as in the West, a series of leading ideas relating to the actual verities of Nature, and the real facts of man’s progress through evolution, which have been communicated to the present writer by Eastern philosophers, and thus fall most readily into an Oriental mould. For the value of these teachings will perhaps be most fully realized when we clearly perceive that they are scientific in their character rather than controversial. Spiritual

truths, if they are truths, may evidently be dealt with in a no less scientific spirit than chemical reactions. And no religious feeling, of whatever colour it may be, need be disturbed by the importation into the general stock of knowledge of new discoveries about the constitution and nature of man on the plane of his higher activities. True religion will eventually find a way to assimilate much fresh knowledge, in the same way that it always finally acquiesces in a general enlargement of Knowledge on the physical plane. This, in the first instance, may sometimes disconcert notions associated with religious belief – as geological science at first embarrassed biblical chronology. But in time men came to see that the essence of the biblical statement does not reside in the literal sense of the cosmological passages in the Old Testament, and religious conceptions grew all the purer for the relief thus afforded. In just the same way when positive scientific knowledge begins to embrace a comprehension of the laws relating to the spiritual development of man, some misconceptions of Nature, long blended with religion, may have to give way, but still it will be found that the central ideas of true religion have been cleared up and strengthened all the better for the process. Especially as such processes continue, will the internal dissensions of the religious world be inevitably subdued. The warfare of sects can only be due to a failure on the part of rival sectarians

to grasp fundamental facts. Could a time come when the basic ideas on which religion rests, should be comprehended with the same certainty with which we comprehend some primary physical laws, and disagreement about them be recognized by all educated people as ridiculous, then there would not be room for very acrimonious divergences of religious sentiment. External of religious thought would still differ in different climates and among different races, as dress and dietaries differ, but such differences would not give rise to intellectual antagonism.

Basic facts of the nature indicated are developed, it appears to me, in the exposition of spiritual science we have now obtained from our Eastern friends. It is quite unnecessary for religious thinkers to turn aside from them under the impression that they are arguments in favour of some Eastern, in preference to the more general Western creed. If medical science were to discover a new fact about man's body, were to unveil some hitherto concealed principle on which the growth of skin and flesh and bone is carried on, that discovery would not be regarded as trenching at all on the domain of religion. Would the domain of religion be invaded, for example, by a discovery that should go one step behind the action of the nerves, and disclose a finer set of activities manipulating these as they manipulate the muscles? At all events, even if such a discovery might begin to reconcile science and

religion, no man who allows any of his higher faculties to enter into his religious thinking would put aside a positive fact of Nature, plainly shown to be such, as hostile to religion. Being a fact it would inevitably fit in with all other facts, and with religious truth among the number. So with the great mass of information in reference to the spiritual evolution of man embodied in the present statement. Our best plan evidently is to ask, before we look into the report I bring forward, not whether it will square in all respects with preconceived views, but whether it really does introduce us to a series of natural facts connected with the growth and development of man's higher faculties. If it does this we may wisely examine the facts first in the scientific spirit, and leave them to exercise whatever effect on collateral belief may be reasonable and legitimate later on.

Ramifying, as the explanation proceeds, into a great many side paths, it will be seen that the central statement now put forward constitutes a theory of anthropology which completes and spiritualises the ordinary notions of physical evolution. The theory which traces man's development by successive and very gradual improvements of animal *forms* from generation to generation, is a very barren and miserable theory regarded as an all-embracing account of creation; but properly understood it paves the way

for a comprehension of the higher concurrent process which is all the while evolving the soul of man in the spiritual realm of existence. The present view of the matter reconciles the evolutionary method with the deeply seated craving of every self-conscious entity for perpetuity of individual life. The disjointed series of improving *forms* on this earth have no individuality, and the life of each in turn is a separate transaction which finds in the next similar transaction, no compensation for suffering involved, no justice, no fruit of its efforts. It is just possible to argue on the assumption of a new independent creation of a human soul every time a new human form is produced by physiological growth, that in the after spiritual states of such soul, justice may be awarded; but then this conception is itself at variance with the fundamental idea of evolution, which traces, or believes that it traces the origin of each soul to the workings of highly developed matter in each case. Nor is it less at variance with the analogies of Nature; but without going into that, it is enough for the moment to perceive that the theory of spiritual evolution, as set forth in the teaching of esoteric science, is at any rate in harmony with these analogies, while at the same time it satisfactorily meets the requirements of justice, and of the instinctive demand for continuity of individual life.

This theory recognizes the evolution of the soul as a process that is quite continuous in itself, though carried out partly through the instrumentality of a great series of dissociated forms. Putting aside for the moment of profound metaphysics of the theory which trace the principle of life from the original first cause of the cosmos, we find the soul as an entity emerging from the animal kingdom, and passing into the earliest human forms, without being at that time ripe for the higher intellectual life with which the present state of humanity renders us familiar. But through successive incarnations in forms whose physical improvement, under the Darwinian law, is constantly fitting them to be its habitation at each return to objective life, it gradually gathers that enormous range of experience which is summed up in its higher development. In the intervals between its physical incarnations it prolongs and works out, and finally exhausts or transmutes into so much abstract development, the personal experiences of each life. This is the clue to the true explanation of that apparent difficulty which besets the cruder form of the theory of reincarnation which independent speculation has sometimes thrown out. Each man is unconscious of having led previous lives, therefore he contends that subsequent lives can afford him no compensation for this one. He overlooks the enormous importance of the intervening spiritual

condition, in which he by no means forgets the personal adventures and emotions he has just passed through, and in the course of which he distills these into so much cosmic progress. In the following pages the elucidation of this profoundly interesting mystery is attempted, and it will be seen that the view of events now afforded us is not only a solution of the problems of life and death, but of many very perplexing experiences on the borderland between those conditions – or rather between physical and spiritual life – which have engaged attention and speculation so widely of recent years in most civilized countries.

## Preface to the Original Edition

THE teachings embodied in the present volume let in a flood of light on questions connected with Buddhist doctrine which have deeply perplexed previous writers on the religion, and offer the world for the first time a practical clue to the meaning of almost all ancient religious symbolism. More than this, the esoteric doctrine, when properly understood, will be found to advance an overpowering claim on the attention of earnest thinkers. Its tenets are not presented to us as the invention of any founder or prophet. Its testimony is based on no written scriptures. Its views of Nature have been evolved by the researches of an immense succession of investigators, qualified for their task by the possession of spiritual faculties and perceptions of a higher order than those belonging to ordinary humanity. In the course of ages the block of knowledge thus accumulated, concerning the origin of the world and of man and the ultimate destinies of our race – concerning also the nature of other worlds and states of existence differing from those of our present life – checked and examined at every point, verified in all directions, and constantly under examination throughout, has come to be looked on by its custodians as constituting the absolute truth

concerning spiritual things, the actual state of the facts regarding vast regions of vital activity lying beyond this earthly existence.

European philosophy, whether concerned with religion or pure metaphysics, has so long been used to a sense of insecurity in speculations outrunning the limits of physical experiment, that absolute truth about spiritual things is hardly recognized any longer by prudent thinkers as a reasonable object of pursuit; but different habits of thought have been acquired in Asia. The secret doctrine which, to a considerable extent, I am now enabled to expound, is regarded not only by all its adherents, but by vast numbers who have never expected to know more of it than that such a doctrine exists, as a mine of entirely trustworthy knowledge from which all religions and philosophies have derived whatever they possess of truth, and with which every religion must coincide if it claims to be a mode of expression for truth.

This is a bold claim indeed, but I venture to announce the following exposition as one of immense importance to the world, because I believe that claim can be substantiated.

I do not say that within the compass of this volume the authenticity of the esoteric doctrine can be proved. Such proof cannot be given by any process of argument; only through the development in each

inquirer for himself of the faculties required for the direct observation of Nature along the lines indicated. But his *prima facie* conclusion may be determined by the extent to which the views of Nature about to be unfolded, may recommend themselves to his mind, and by the reasons which exist for trusting the powers of observation of those by whom they are communicated.

Will it be supposed that the very magnitude of the claim now made on behalf of the esoteric doctrine, lifts the present statement out of the region of inquiry to which its title refers – inquiry as to the real inner meaning of the definite and specific religion called Buddhism? The fact is, however, that esoteric Buddhism, though by no means divorced from the associations of exoteric Buddhism, must not be conceived to constitute a mere *imperium in imperio* – a central school of culture in the vortex of the Buddhist world. In proportion as Buddhism retreats into the inner penetralia of its faith, these are found to merge into the inner penetralia of other faiths. The cosmic conceptions, and the knowledge of Nature on which Buddhism not merely rests, but which constitute esoteric Buddhism, equally constitute esoteric Brahmanism. And the esoteric doctrine is thus regarded by those of all creeds who are “enlightened” (in the Buddhist sense) as the absolute

truth concerning Nature, Man, the origin of the Universe, and the destinies toward which its inhabitants are tending. At the same time, exoteric Buddhism has remained in closer union with the esoteric doctrine than any other popular religion. An exposition of the inner knowledge, addressed to English readers in the present day, will thus associate itself irresistibly with familiar outlines of Buddhist teaching. It will certainly impart to these a living meaning they generally seem to be without, but all the more on this account may the esoteric doctrine be most conveniently studied in its Buddhist aspect: one, moreover, which has been so strongly impressed upon it since the time of Gautama Buddha that though the essence of the doctrine dates back to a far more remote antiquity, the Buddhist colouring has now permeated its whole substance. That which I am about to put before the reader *is* esoteric Buddhism, and for European students approaching it for the first time, any other designation would be a misnomer.

The statement I have to make must be considered in its entirety before the reader will be able to comprehend why initiates in the esoteric doctrine regard the concession involved in the present disclosures of the general outlines of this doctrine as one of startling magnitude. One explanation of this feeling, however, may be readily seen to spring from

the extreme sacredness that has always been attached by their ancient guardians to the inner vital truths of Nature. Hitherto this sacredness has always prescribed their absolute concealment from the profane herd. And so far as that policy of concealment – the tradition of countless ages – is now being given up, the new departure which the appearance of this volume signalizes will be contemplated with surprise and regret by a great many initiated disciples. The surrender to criticism which may sometimes perhaps be clumsy and irreverent, of doctrines which have hitherto been regarded by such persons as too majestic in their import to be talked of at all except under circumstances of befitting solemnity, will seem to them a terrible profanation of the great mysteries. From the European point of view it would be unreasonable to expect that such a book as this can be exempt from the usual rough-and-tumble treatment of new ideas. And special convictions or common-place bigotry may sometimes render such treatment in the present case peculiarly inimical. But all that, though a matter of course to European exponents of the doctrine like myself, will seem very grievous and disgusting to its earlier and more regular representatives. They will appeal sadly to the wisdom of the time-honoured rule which, in the old symbolical way, forbade the initiates from casting pearls before swine.

Happily, as I think, the rule has not been allowed to operate any longer to the prejudice of those who, while still far from being initiated, in the occult sense of the term, will probably have become, by sheer force of modern culture, qualified to appreciate the concession.

Part of the information contained in the following pages was first thrown out in a fragmentary form in the *Theosophist*, a monthly magazine, published at Madras, by the leaders of the Theosophical Society. As almost all the articles referred to have been my own writing, I have not hesitated to weld parts of them, when this course has been convenient, into the present volume. A certain advantage is gained by thus showing how the separate pieces of the mosaic as first presented to public notice, drop naturally into their places in the (comparatively) finished pavement.

The doctrine or system now disclosed in its broad outlines has been so jealously guarded hitherto, that no mere literary researches, though they might have curry-combed all India, could have brought to light any morsel of the information thus revealed. It is given out to the world at last by the free grace of those in whose keeping it has hitherto lain. Nothing could ever have extorted from them its very first letter. It is only after a perusal of the present explanations that their position generally, as regards their present disclosures

or their previous reticence can be criticized or even comprehended. The views of Nature now put forward are altogether unfamiliar to European thinkers; the policy of the graduates in esoteric knowledge, which has grown out of their long intimacy with these views must be considered in connection with the peculiar bearings of the doctrine itself.

As for the circumstances under which these revelations were first foreshadowed in the *Theosophist*, and are now rounded off and expanded as my readers will perceive, it is enough for the moment to say, that the Theosophical Society, through my connection with which the materials dealt with in this volume have come into my hands, owes its establishment to certain persons who are among the custodians of esoteric science. The information poured out at last for the benefit of all who are ripe to receive it, has been destined for communication to the world through the Theosophical Society since the foundation of that body, and later circumstances only have indicated myself as the agent through whom the communication could be conveniently made.

Let me add, that I do not regard myself as the sole exponent for the outer world, at this crisis, of esoteric truth. These teachings are the outcome, as regards philosophical knowledge, of the relations with the

outer world which have been established by the custodians of esoteric truth *through me*. And it is only regarding the acts and intentions of those esoteric teachers who have chosen to work through me, that I can have any certain knowledge. But, in different ways, some other writers seem to be engaged in expounding for the benefit of the world – and, as I believe, in accordance with a great plan, of which this volume is a part – the same truths, in different aspects, that I am commissioned to unfold. Probably the great activity at present of literary speculation dealing with problems that overstep the range of physical knowledge, may also be in some way provoked by that policy, on the part of the great custodians of esoteric truth, of which my own book is certainly one manifestation. Again, the ardour now shown in “Psychical Research,” by the very distinguished, highly gifted, and cultivated men, who lead the society in London devoted to that object, is, to my inner convictions – knowing as I do something of the way the spiritual aspirations of the world are silently influenced by those whose work lies in that department of Nature – the obvious fruit of efforts, parallel to those with which I am more immediately concerned.

It only remains for me to disclaim, on behalf of the treatise which ensues, any pretension to high finish as

regards the language in which it is cast. Longer familiarity with the vast and complicated scheme of cosmogony disclosed, will no doubt suggest improvements in the phraseology employed to expound it.

Two years ago, neither I, nor any other European living, knew the alphabet of the science here for the first time put into a scientific shape – or subject at all events to an attempt in that direction – the science of Spiritual Causes and their Effects, of Super-physical Consciousness, of Cosmical Evolution. Though ideas had begun to offer themselves to the world in more or less embarrassing disguise of mystic symbology, no attempt had ever been made by any esoteric teacher, two years back, to put the doctrine forward in its plain abstract purity. As my own instruction progressed on those lines, I have had to coin phrases and suggest English words as equivalents for the ideas which were presented to my mind. I am by no means convinced that in all cases I have coined the best possible phrases and hit on the most neatly expressive words. For example, at the threshold of the subject we come upon the necessity of giving some name to the various elements or attributes of which the complete human creature is made up. “Element” would be an impossible word to use, on account of the confusion that would arise from its use in other significations; and the least objectionable on the whole seemed to me

“principle,” though to an ear trained in the niceties of metaphysical expression this word will have a very unsatisfactory sound in some of its present applications. Quite possibly, therefore, in process of time the Western nomenclature of the esoteric doctrine may be greatly developed in advance of that I have provisionally constructed. The Oriental nomenclature is far more elaborate, but metaphysical Sanskrit seems to be painfully embarrassing to a translator – the fault, my Indian friends assure me, not of Sanskrit, but of the language in which they are now required to express the Sanskrit ideal. Eventually we may find that, with the help of a little borrowing from familiar Greek quarries, English may prove more receptive of the new doctrine – or rather, of the primeval doctrine as newly disclosed – than has been supposed in the East.

# CHAPTER I

## Esoteric Teachers

THE information contained in the following pages is no collection of inferences deduced from study. I am bringing to my readers knowledge which I have obtained by favour rather than by effort. It will not be found the less valuable on that account; I venture, on the contrary, to declare that it will be found of incalculably greater value, easily as I have obtained it, than any results in a similar direction which I could possibly have procured by ordinary methods of research, even had I possessed, in the highest degree, that which I make no claim to possess at all – Oriental scholarship.

Every one who has been concerned with Indian literature, and still more, any one who in India has taken interest in talking with cultivated Natives on philosophical subjects will be aware of a general conviction existing in the East that there are men living who know a great deal more about philosophy in the highest acceptation of the word – the science, the true knowledge of spiritual things – than can be found recorded in any books. In Europe the notion of secrecy as applied to science is so repulsive to the prevailing instinct, that the first inclination of

European thinkers is to deny the existence of that which they so much dislike. But circumstances have fully assured me during my residence in India that the conviction just referred to is perfectly well founded, and I have been privileged at last to receive a very considerable mass of instruction in the hitherto secret knowledge over which Oriental philosophers have brooded silently till now; instruction which has hitherto been only imparted to sympathetic students, prepared themselves to migrate into the camp of secrecy. Their teachers have been more than content that all other inquirers should be left in doubt as to whether there was anything of importance to learn at their hands.

With quite as much antipathy at starting as any one could have entertained to the old Oriental policy in regard to knowledge, I came, nevertheless, to perceive that the old Oriental knowledge itself was a very real and important possession. It may be excusable to regard the high grapes as sour so long as they are quite out of reach, but it would be foolish to persist in that opinion if a tall friend hands down a bunch and one finds them sweet.

For reasons that will appear as the present explanations proceed, the very considerable block of hitherto secret teaching this volume contains, has been conveyed to me, not only without conditions of

the usual kind, but to the express end that I might convey it in my turn to the world at large.

Without the light of hitherto secret Oriental knowledge, it is impossible by any study of its published literature – English or Sanskrit – for students of even the most scholarly qualifications, to reach a comprehension of the inner doctrines and real meaning of any Oriental religion. This assertion conveys no reproach to the sympathetic, learned, and industrious writers of great ability who have studied Oriental religions generally, and Buddhism especially, in their external aspects. Buddhism, above all, is a religion which has enjoyed a dual existence from the very beginning of its introduction to the world. The real inner meaning of its doctrines has been kept back from uninitiated students, while the outer teachings have merely presented the multitude with a code of moral lessons and a veiled, symbolical literature, hinting at the existence of knowledge in the background.

This secret knowledge, in reality, long antedated the passage through earth-life of Gautama Buddha. Brahmin philosophy, in ages before Buddha, embodied the identical doctrine which may now be described as Esoteric Buddhism. Its outlines had indeed been blurred; its scientific form partially confused; but the general body of knowledge was

already in possession of a select few before Buddha came to deal with it. Buddha, however, undertook the task of revising and refreshing the esoteric science of the inner circle of initiates, as well as the morality of the outer world. The circumstances under which this work was done, have been wholly misunderstood, nor would a straightforward explanation thereof be intelligible without explanations, which must first be furnished by a survey of the esoteric science itself.

From Buddha's time till now the esoteric science referred to has been jealously guarded as a precious heritage belonging exclusively to regularly initiated members of mysteriously organized associations. These, so far as Buddhism is concerned, are the Arahats, or more properly Arhats, referred to in Buddhist literature. They are the initiates who tread the "fourth path of holiness," spoken of in esoteric Buddhist writings. Mr Rhys Davids, referring to a multiplicity of original texts and Sanskrit authorities, says – "One might fill pages with the awe-struck and ecstatic praise which is lavished in Buddhist writings on this condition of mind, the fruit of the fourth path, the state of an Arahat, of a man made perfect according to the Buddhist faith." And then making a series of running quotations from Sanskrit authorities, he says – "To him who has finished the path and passed beyond sorrow, who has freed himself on all sides, thrown away every fetter, there is no more fever

or grief... For such there are no more births... they are in the enjoyment of Nirvana. Their old karma is exhausted, no new karma is being produced; their hearts are free from the longing after future life, and no new yearnings springing up within them, they, the wise are extinguished like a lamp.” These passages, and all like them, convey to European readers, at all events, an entirely false idea as to what sort of person an Arhat really is, as to the life he leads while on earth, and what he anticipates later on. But the elucidation of such points may be postponed for the moment. Some further passages from exoteric treatises may first be selected to show what an Arhat is generally supposed to be.

Mr Rhys Davids, speaking of Jhana and Samadhi – the belief that it was possible by intense self-absorption to attain supernatural faculties and powers – goes on to say – “So far as I am aware, no instance is recorded of any one, not either a member of the order, or a Brahmin ascetic, acquiring these powers. A Buddha always possessed them; whether Arahats as such, could work the particular miracles in question, and whether of mendicants, only Arahats or only Asekhas could do so, is at present not clear.” Very little in the sources of information on the subject that have hitherto been explored will be found clear. But I am now merely endeavouring to show that Buddhist literature teems with allusions to the greatness and

powers of the Arhats. For more intimate knowledge concerning them, special circumstances must furnish us with the required explanations.

Mr Arthur Lillie, in “Buddha and Early Buddhism,” tells us – “Six supernatural faculties were expected of the ascetic before he could claim the grade of Arhat. They are constantly alluded to in the Sutras as the six supernatural faculties, usually without further specification... Man has a body composed of the four elements... in this transitory body his intelligence is enchained, the ascetic finding himself thus confused, directs his mind to the creation of the *Manas*. He represents to himself, in thought, another body created from this material body – a body with a form, members, and organs. This body, in relation to the material body, is like the sword and the scabbard; or a serpent issuing from a basket in which it is confined. The ascetic then, purified and perfected, begins to practise supernatural faculties. He finds himself able to pass through material obstacles, walls, ramparts &c; he is able to throw his phantasmal appearance into many places at once... he can leave this world and even reach the heaven of Brahma himself... He acquires the power of hearing the sounds of the unseen world as distinctly as those of the phenomenal world – more distinctly in point of fact. Also by the power of *Manas* he is able to

read the most secret thoughts of others, and to tell their characters.” And so on with illustrations. Mr Lillie has not quite accurately divined the nature of the truth lying behind this popular version of the facts; but it is hardly necessary to quote more to show that the powers of the Arhats and their insight into spiritual things are respected by the world of Buddhism most profoundly, even though the Arhats themselves have been singularly indisposed to favour the world with autobiographies or scientific accounts of “the six supernatural powers.”

A few sentences from Mr. Hoey’s recent translation of Dr Oldenberg’s “Budda: his Life, his Doctrine, his Order,” may fall conveniently into this place, and then we may pass on. We read: – “Buddhist proverbial philosophy attributes in innumerable passages the possession of Nirvana to the *saint* who still treads the earth: ‘The disciple who has put off lust and desire, rich in wisdom, has here on earth attained deliverance from death, the rest, the Nirvana, the eternal state. He who has escaped from the trackless hard mazes of the Sansara, who has crossed over and reached the shore, self-absorbed, without stumbling and without doubt, who has delivered himself from the earthly and attained Nirvana, him I call a true Brahmin.’ If the saint will even now put an end to his state of being he can do so, but the majority stand fast until Nature

has reached her goal; of such may those words be said which are put in the mouth of the most prominent of Buddha's disciples, 'I long not for death; I long not for life; I wait till mine hour come, like a servant who awaiteth his reward.'

A multiplication of such quotations would merely involve the repetition in various forms of exoteric conceptions concerning the Arhats. Like every fact or thought in Buddhism, the Arhat has two aspects, that in which he is presented to the world at large, and that in which he lives, moves, and has his being. In the popular estimation he is a saint waiting for a spiritual reward of the kind the populace can understand – a wonder-worker meanwhile by favour of supernatural agencies. In reality he is the long-tried and proved-worthy custodian of the deepest and innermost philosophy of the one fundamental religion which Buddha refreshed and restored, and a student of natural science standing in the very foremost front of human knowledge, in regard not merely to the mysteries of spirit, but to the material constitution of the world as well.

Arhat is a Buddhist designation. That which is more familiar in India, where the attributes of Arhatship are not necessarily associated with professions of Buddhism, is Mahatma. With stories about the Mahatmas, India is saturated. The older

Mahatmas are generally spoken of as Rishis; but the terms are interchangeable, and I have heard the title Rishi applied to men now living. All the attributes of the Arhats mentioned in Buddhist writings are described with no less reverence in Indian literature, as those of the Mahatmas, and this volume might be readily filled with translations of vernacular books, giving accounts of miraculous achievements by such of them as are known to history and tradition by name.

In reality, the Arhats and the Mahatmas are the same men. At that level of spiritual exaltation, supreme knowledge of the esoteric doctrine blends all original sectarian distinctions. By whatever name such *illuminati* may be called, they are the adepts of occult knowledge, sometimes spoken of in India now as the Brothers, and the custodians of the spiritual science which has been handed down to them by their predecessors.

We may search both ancient and modern literature in vain, however, for any systematic explanation of their doctrine or science. A good deal of this is dimly set forth in occult writing; but very little of this is of the least use to readers who take up the subject without previous knowledge acquired independently of books. It is under favour of direct instruction from one of their number that I am now enabled to attempt

an outline of the Mahatmas' teaching, and it is in the same way that I have picked up what I know concerning the organization to which most of them, and the greatest, in the present day belong.

All over the world there are occultists of various degrees of eminence, and occult fraternities even, which have a great deal in common with the leading fraternity now established in Tibet. But all my inquiries into the subject have convinced me that the Tibetan Brotherhood is incomparably the highest of such associations, and regarded as such by all other associations – worthy of being looked upon themselves as really “enlightened” in the occult sense of the term. There are, it is true, many isolated mystics in India who are altogether self-taught and unconnected with occult bodies. Many of these will explain that they themselves attain to higher pinnacles of spiritual enlightenment than the Brothers of Tibet, or any other people on earth. But the examination of such claims in all cases I have encountered, would, I think, lead any impartial outsider, however little qualified himself by personal development to be a judge of occult enlightenment, to the conclusion that they are altogether unfounded. I know one native of India, for example, a man of European education, holding a high appointment under Government, of good station in society, most elevated character, and enjoying unusual respect with such Europeans as are concerned

with him in official life, who will only accord to the Brothers of Tibet a second place in the world of spiritual enlightenment. The first place he regards as occupied by one person, now in this world no longer – his own occult master in life – whom he resolutely asserts to have been in incarnation of the Supreme Being. His own (my friend's) inner senses were so awakened by this Master, that the visions of his entranced state, into which he can still throw himself at will, are to him the only spiritual region in which he can feel interested. Convinced that the Supreme Being was his personal instructor from the beginning, and continues so still in the subjective state, he is naturally inaccessible to suggestions that his impressions may be distorted by reason of his own misdirected psychological development. Again, the highly cultivated devotees, to be met with occasionally in India, who build up a conception of Nature, the universe, and God, entirely on a metaphysical basis, and who have evolved their systems by sheer force of transcendental thinking, will take some established system of philosophy as its groundwork, and amplify on this to an extent which only an Oriental metaphysician could dream of. They win disciples who put implicit faith in them, and found their little school which flourishes for a time within its own limits; but speculative philosophy of such a kind is rather occupation for the mind than

knowledge. Such “Masters,” by comparison with the organized adepts of the highest brotherhood, are like rowing-boats compared with ocean steamships – helpful conveyances on their own native lake or river, but not craft to whose protection you can trust yourself on a world-wide voyage of exploration over the sea.

Descending lower again in the scale, we find India dotted all over with Yogis and Fakirs, in all stages of self-development, from that of dirty savages, but little elevated above the gipsy fortune-tellers of an English racecourse, to men whose seclusion a stranger will find it very difficult to penetrate, and whose abnormal faculties and powers need only be seen or experienced to shatter the incredulity of the most contented representative of modern Western scepticism. Careless inquirers are very apt to confound such persons with the great adepts of whom they may vaguely hear.

Concerning the real adepts, meanwhile, I cannot at present venture on any account of what the Tibetan organization is like, as regards its highest ruling authorities. Those Mahatmas themselves, of whom some more or less adequate conception may, perhaps, be formed by readers who will follow me patiently to the end, are subordinate by several degrees to the chief of all. Let us deal rather with the earlier conditions of occult training, which can more easily be grasped.

The level of elevation which constitutes a man – what the outer world calls a Mahatma or “Brother” – is only attained after prolonged and weary probation, and anxious ordeals of really terrible severity. One may find people who have spent twenty or thirty years or more, in blameless and arduous devotion to the life-task on which they have entered, and are still in the earlier degrees of chelaship, still looking up to the heights of adeptship as far above their heads. And at whatever age a boy or man dedicates himself to the occult career, he dedicates himself to it, be it remembered, without any reservations and for life. The task he undertakes is the development in himself of a great many faculties and attributes which are so utterly dormant in ordinary mankind, that their very existence is unsuspected – the possibility of their development denied. And these faculties and attributes must be developed by the chela himself, with very little, if any, help, beyond guidance and direction from his master. “The adept.” says an occult aphorism, “becomes: he is not made.” One may illustrate this point by reference to a very common-place physical exercise. Every man living, having the ordinary use of his limbs, is qualified to swim. But put those who, as the common phrase goes, cannot swim, into deep water, and they will struggle and be drowned. The mere way to move the limbs is no mystery; but unless the swimmer in moving them has a full belief that

such movement will produce the required result, the required result is not produced. In this case, we are dealing with mechanical forces merely, but the same principle runs up into dealings with subtler forces. Very much further than people generally imagine will mere "confidence" carry the occult neophyte. How many European readers, who would be quite incredulous if told of some results which occult chelas in the most incipient stages of their training have to accomplish by sheer force of confidence, hear constantly in church nevertheless, the familiar Biblical assurances of the power which resides in faith, and let the words pass by like the wind, leaving no impression.

The great end and purpose of adeptship is the achievement of spiritual development, the nature of which is only veiled and disguised by the common phrases of exoteric language. That the adept seeks to unite his soul with God, that he may thereby pass into Nirvana, is a statement that conveys no definite meaning to the ordinary reader, and the more he examines it with the help of ordinary books and methods, the less likely will he be to realize the nature of the process contemplated, or of the condition desired. It will be necessary to deal first with the esoteric conception of Nature, and the origin and destinies of Man, which differ widely from theological conceptions, before an explanation of the aim which

the adept pursues can become intelligible. Meanwhile, however, it is desirable, at the very outset, to disabuse the reader of one misconception in regard to the objects of adeptship that he may very likely have framed.

The development of those spiritual faculties, whose culture has to do with the highest objects of the occult life, gives rise, as it progresses, to a great deal of incidental knowledge, having to do with the physical laws of Nature not yet generally understood. This knowledge, and the practical art of manipulating certain obscure forces of Nature, which it brings in its train, invest an adept, and even an adept's pupils, at a comparatively early stage of their education, with very extraordinary powers, the application of which to matters of daily life will sometimes produce results that seem altogether miraculous; and, from the ordinary point of view, the acquisition of apparently miraculous power is such a stupendous achievement, that people are sometimes apt to fancy that the adept's object in seeking the knowledge he attains has been to invest himself with these coveted powers. It would be as reasonable to say of any great patriot of military history that his object in becoming a soldier had been to wear a gay uniform and impress the imagination of the nursemaids.

The Oriental method of cultivating knowledge has

always differed diametrically from that pursued in the West during the growth of modern science. Whilst Europe has investigated Nature as publicly as possible, every step being discussed with the utmost freedom, and every fresh fact acquired, circulated at once for the benefit of all, Asiatic science has been studied secretly and its conquests jealously guarded. I need not as yet attempt either criticism or defence of its methods. But at all events these methods have been relaxed to some extent in my own case, and, as already stated, it is with the full consent of my teachers that I now follow the bent of my own inclinations as a European, and communicate what I have learned to all who may be willing to receive it. Later on it will be seen how the departure from the ordinary rules of occult study embodied in the concessions now made, falls naturally into its place in the whole scheme of occult philosophy. The approaches to that philosophy have always been open, in one sense, to all. Vaguely throughout the world in various ways has been diffused the idea that *some* process of study which men here and there did actually follow, might lead to the acquisition of a higher kind of knowledge than that taught to mankind at large in books or by public religious preachers. The East, as pointed out, has always been more than vaguely impressed with this belief, but even in the West the whole block of symbolical literature

relating to astrology, alchemy, and mysticism generally has fermented in European society, carrying to some few peculiarly receptive and qualified minds the conviction that behind all this superficially meaningless nonsense great truths lay concealed. For such persons eccentric study has sometimes revealed hidden passages leading to the grandest imaginable realms of enlightenment. But till now, in all such cases, in accordance with the law of those schools, the neophyte no sooner forced his way into the region of mystery than he was bound over to the most inviolable secrecy as to everything connected with his entrance and further progress there. In Asia in the same way, the "chela," or pupil of occultism, no sooner became a chela than he ceased to be a witness on behalf of the reality of occult knowledge. I have been astonished to find, since my own connection with the subject, how numerous such chelas are. But it is impossible to imagine any human act more improbable than the unauthorized revelation by any such chela, to persons in the outer world, that he is one, and so the great esoteric school of philosophy successfully guards its seclusion.

In a former book, "The Occult World," I have given a full and straightforward narrative of the circumstances under which I came in contact with the gifted and deeply instructed men from whom I have since obtained the teaching this volume contains. I

need not repeat the story. I now come forward prepared to deal with the subject in a new way. The existence of occult adepts, and the importance of their acquirements, may be established along two different lines of argument: firstly, by means of external evidence – the testimony of qualified witnesses, the manifestation by or through persons connected with adepts, of abnormal faculties affording more than a presumption of abnormally enlarged knowledge; secondly, by the presentation of such a considerable portion of this knowledge as may convey intrinsic assurances of its own value. My first book proceeded by the former method; I now approach the more formidable task of working on the latter.

## Annotations

The further we advance in occult study, the more exalted in many ways become our conceptions of the Mahatmas. The complete comprehension of the manner in which these persons become differentiated from human kind at large, is not to be achieved by the help of mere intellectual effort. These are aspects of the adept nature which have to do with the extraordinary development of the higher principles in man, which cannot be realized by the application of the lower. But while crude conceptions in the beginning thus fall very short of reaching the real level of the facts, a curious complication of the problem arises in this way. Our first idea of an adept who has achieved the power of penetrating the tremendous secrets of spiritual nature, is modelled on our conception of a very highly gifted man of science on our own plane.

We are apt to think of him as once an adept always an adept – as a very exalted human being, who must necessarily bring into play in all the relations of his life the attributes that attach to him as a Mahatma. In this way while – as above pointed out – we shall certainly fail, do all we can, to do justice in our thoughts to his attributes as a Mahatma, we may very easily run to the opposite extreme in our thinking

about him in his ordinary human aspect, and thus land ourselves in many perplexities, as we acquire a partial familiarity with the characteristics of the occult world. It is just because the highest attributes of adeptship have to do with principles in human nature which quite transcend the limits of physical existence, that the adept or Mahatma can only be such in the highest acceptance of the word, when he is, as the phrase goes, "out of the body," or at all events thrown by special efforts of his will into an abnormal condition.

When he is not called upon to make such efforts or to pass entirely beyond the limitations of this fleshly prison, he is much more like an ordinary man than experience of him in some of his aspects would lead his disciples to believe.

A correct appreciation of this state of things explains the apparent contradiction involved in the position of the occult pupil towards his masters, as compared with some of the declarations that the master himself will frequently put forward. For example, the Mahatmas are persistent in asserting that they are not infallible, that they are men, like the rest of us, perhaps with a somewhat more enlarged comprehension of nature than the generality of mankind, but still liable to err both in the direction of practical business with which they may be concerned,

and in their estimate of the characters of other men, or the capacity of candidates for occult development. But how are we to reconcile statements of this nature with the fundamental principle at the bottom of all occult research which enjoins the neophyte to put his trust in the teaching and guidance of his master absolutely and without reserve? The solution of the difficulty is found in the state of things above referred to. While the adept may be a man quite surprisingly liable to err sometimes in the manipulation of worldly business, just as with ourselves some of the greatest men of genius are liable to make mistakes in their daily life that matter-of-fact people would never commit, on the other hand, directly a Mahatma comes to deal with the higher mysteries of spiritual science, he does so by virtue of the exercise of his Mahatma-attributes, and in dealing with these can hardly be recognized as liable to err.

This consideration enables us to feel that the trustworthiness of the teachings derived from such a source as those which have inspired the present volume, is altogether above the reach of small incidents which in the progress of our experience may seem to claim a revision of that enthusiastic confidence in the supreme wisdom of the adepts which the first approaches to occult study will generally evoke.

Not that such enthusiasm or reverence will really be *diminished* on the part of any occult chela as his comprehension of the world he is entering expands. The man who in one of his aspects is a Mahatma, may rather be brought within the limits of affectionate human regard, than deprived of his claims to reverence, by the consideration that in his ordinary life he is not so utterly lifted above the common-place run of human feeling as some of his Nirvanic experiences might lead us to believe that he would be.

If we keep constantly in mind that an adept is only truly an adept when exercising adept functions but that when exercising adept functions, but that when exercising these he may soar into spiritual *rapport* with that which is, in regard at all events to the limitations of our solar system, all that we practically mean by omniscience, we shall then be guarded from many of the mistakes that the embarrassments of the subject might create.

Intricacies concerning the nature of the adept may be noticed here, which will hardly be quite intelligible without reference to some later chapters of this book, but which have so important a bearing on all attempts to understand what adeptship is really like that it may be convenient to deal with them at once. The dual nature of the Mahatma is so complete that some of his influence or wisdom on the higher planes

of nature may actually be drawn upon by those in peculiar psychic relations with him, without the Mahatma-man being at the moment even conscious that such an appeal has been made to him. In this way it becomes open to us to speculate on the possibility that the relation between the spiritual Mahatma and the Mahatma-man may sometimes be rather in the nature of what is sometimes spoken of in esoteric writing as an overshadowing than as an incarnation in the complete sense of the word.

Furthermore as another independent complication of the matter we reach this fact, that each Mahatma is not merely a human ego in a very exalted state, but belongs, so to speak, to some specific department in the great economy of nature. Every adept must belong to one or other of seven great types of adeptship, but although we may almost certainly infer that correspondences might be traced between these various types and the seven principles of man, I should shrink myself from attempting a complete elucidation of this hypothesis. It will be enough to apply the idea to what we know vaguely of the occult organization in its higher regions. For some time past it has been affirmed in esoteric writing that there are five great Chohans or superior Mahatmas presiding over the whole body of the adept fraternity. When the foregoing chapter of this book was written, I was under the impression that one supreme chief on a

different level again exercised authority over these five Chohans, but it now appears to me that this personage may rather be regarded as a sixth Chohan, himself the head of the sixth type of Mahatmas, and this conjecture leads at once to the further inference that there must be a seventh Chohan to complete the correspondences which we thus discern. But just as the seventh principle in nature or in man is a conception of the most intangible order eluding the grasp of any intellectual thinking, and only describable in shadowy phrases of metaphysical non-significance, so we may be quite sure that the seventh Chohan is very unapproachable by untrained imaginations. But even he no doubt plays a part in what may be called the higher economy of spiritual nature, and that there is such a personage visible occasionally to some of the other Mahatmas I take to be the case. But speculation concerning him is valuable chiefly as helping to give consistency to the idea above thrown out, according to which the Mahatmas may be comprehended in their true aspect as necessary phenomena of nature without whom the evolution of humanity could hardly be imagined as advancing, not as merely the exceptional men who have attained great spiritual exaltation.

## CHAPTER II

### The Constitution of Man

A SURVEY of Cosmogony, as comprehended by occult science, must precede any attempt to explain the means by which a knowledge of that cosmogony itself has been acquired. The methods of esoteric research have grown out of natural facts, with which exoteric science is wholly unacquainted. These natural facts are concerned with the premature development in occult adepts of faculties, which mankind at large has not yet evolved; and these faculties, in turn, enable their possessors to explore the mysteries of Nature, and verify the esoteric doctrines, setting forth its grand design. The practical student of occultism may develop the faculties first and apply them to the observation of Nature afterwards, but the exhibition of the theory of Nature for Western readers merely seeking its intellectual comprehension, must precede consideration of the inner senses, which occult research employs. On the other hand, a survey of cosmogony, as comprehended by occult science, could only be scientifically arranged at the expense of intelligibility for European readers. To begin at the beginning, we should endeavour to realize the state of the universe before evolution sets in. This subject is by

no means shirked by esoteric students, and later on, in the course of this sketch, some hints will be given concerning the views occultism entertains of the earlier processes through which cosmic matter passes on its way to evolution. But an orderly statement of the earliest processes of Nature would embody references to man's spiritual constitution, which would not be understood without some preliminary explanation.

Seven distinct principles are recognized by esoteric science, as entering into the constitution of man. The classification differs so widely from any with which European readers will be familiar that I shall naturally be asked for the grounds on which occultism reaches so far-fetched a conclusion. But I must, on account of inherent peculiarities in the subject, which will be comprehended later on, beg for this Oriental knowledge I am bringing home, a hearing (in the first instance at all events) of the Oriental kind. The Oriental and the European systems of conveying knowledge are as unlike as any two methods can be.

The West pricks and piques the learner's controversial instinct at every step. He is encouraged to dispute and resist conviction. He is forbidden to take any scientific statement on authority. *Pari Passu*, as he acquires knowledge, he must learn how that knowledge has been acquired, and he is made to feel





























































































































































































































































































































































































































## CHAPTER X

### Nirvana

A COMPLETE assimilation of esoteric teaching up to the point we have now reached will enable us to approach the consideration of the subject which exoteric writers on Buddhism have generally treated as the doctrinal starting-point of that religion.

Hitherto, for want of any better method of seeking out the true meaning of Nirvana, Buddhist scholars have generally picked the world to pieces, and examined its roots and fragments. One might as hopefully seek to ascertain the smell of a flower by dissecting the paper on which its picture was painted. It is difficult for minds schooled in the intellectual processes of physical research – as all our Western nineteenth-century minds are, directly or indirectly – to comprehend the first spiritual state above this life, that of Devachan. Such conditions of existence are but partly for the understanding, a higher faculty must be employed to realize them, and all the more is it possible to force their meaning upon another mind by words. It is by first awakening that higher faculty in his pupil, and then putting the pupil in a position to observe for himself, that the regular occult teacher proceeds in such a matter.







































































persistent, of course) precisely adapted by its Karma to inhabit that potential body. Given these circumstances, and the imperfectly organized child is conceived and brought into the world, to be a cause of trouble to himself and others – an effect becoming a cause in its turn – and a living enigma for philosophers endeavouring to explain the origin of evil.

The same explanation applies with modifications to a vast range of cases that might be cited to illustrate the problem of evil in the world. Incidentally, moreover, it covers a question connected with the operation of the Karmic law that can hardly be called a difficulty, as the answer would probably be suggested by the bearings of the doctrine itself, but is none the less entitled to notice. The selective assimilation of Karma-laden spirits with parentage which corresponds to their necessities or deserts, is the obvious explanation which reconciles rebirth with atavism and heredity. The child born may seem to reproduce the moral and mental peculiarities of parents or ancestors as well as their physical likeness, and the fact suggests the notion that his soul is as much an offshoot of the family tree as his physical frame. It is unnecessary to enlarge here on the multifarious embarrassments by which that theory would be surrounded, on the extravagance of supposing that a soul thus thrown off, like a spark

from an anvil, without any spiritual past behind it, can have a spiritual future before it. The soul, which was thus merely a function of the body, would certainly come to an end with the dissolution of that out of which it arose. The esoteric doctrine, however, as regards transmitted characteristics, will afford a complete explanation of that phenomenon, as well as of all others connected with human life. The family into which he is born is, to the re-incarnating spirit, what a new planet is to the whole tide of humanity on a round along the manvantaric chain. It has been built up by a process of evolution working on a line transverse to that of humanity's approach; but it is fit for humanity to inhabit when the time comes. So with the re-incarnating spirit, it presses forward into the objective world, the influences which have retained it in the Devachanic state having been exhausted, and it touches the spring of Nature, so to speak, provoking the development of a child which without such an impulse would merely have been a potentiality, not an actual development; but in whose parentage it finds – of course unconsciously by the blind operation of its affinities – the exact conditions of renewed life for which it has prepared itself during its last existence. Certainly we must never forget the presence of exceptions in all broad rules of Nature. In the present case it may sometimes happen that mere accident causes an injury to a child at birth. Thus a

crippled frame may come to be bestowed on a spirit whose Karma has by no means earned that penalty, and so with a great variety of accidents. But of these all that need be said is that Nature is not at all embarrassed by her accidents; she has ample time to repair them. The undeserved suffering of one life is amply redressed under the operation of the Karmic law in the next, or the next. There is plenty of time for making the account even, and the adepts declare, I believe, that, as a matter-of-fact, in the long-run undeserved suffering operates as good luck rather than otherwise, thereby deriving from a purely scientific observation of facts a doctrine which religion has benevolently invented sometimes for the consolation of the afflicted.

While the esoteric doctrine affords in this way an unexpected solution of the most perplexing phenomena of life, it does this at no sacrifice in any direction of the attributes we may fairly expect of a true religious science. Foremost among the claims we may make on such a system is that it shall contemplate no injustice, either in the direction of wrong done to the undeserving, or of benefits bestowed on the undeserving; and the justice of its operation must be discernible in great things and small alike. The legal maxim, *de minimis non curat lex*, is means of escape for human fallibility from the

consequences of its own imperfections. There is no such thing as indifference to small things in chemistry or mechanics.

Nature in physical operations responds with exactitude to small causes as certainly as to great, and we may feel instinctively sure that in her spiritual operations also she has no clumsy habit of treating trifles as of no consequence, of ignoring small debts in consideration of paying big ones, like a trader of doubtful integrity content to respect obligations which are serious enough to be enforced by law. Now the minor acts of life, good and bad alike, are of necessity ignored under any system which makes the final question at stake, admission to or exclusion from a uniform or approximately uniform condition of blessedness. Even as regards that merit and demerit which is solely concerned with spiritual consequences, no accurate response could be made by Nature except by means of that infinitely graduated condition of spiritual existence described by the esoteric doctrine as the Devachanic state. But the complexity to be dealt with is more serious than even the various conditions of Devachanic existence can meet. No system of consequences ensuing to mankind after the life now under observation, can be recognized as adapted scientifically to the emergency, unless it responds to the sense of justice, in regard to the multifarious acts and habits of life generally, including those which

merely relate to physical existence, and are not deeply coloured by right or wrong.

Now, it is only by a return to physical existence that people can possibly be conceived to reap with precise accuracy the harvest of the minor causes they may have generated when last in objective life. Thus, on a careful examination of the matter, the Karmic law, so unattractive to Buddhist students, hitherto, in its exoteric shape, and no wonder, will be seen not only to reconcile itself to the sense of justice, but to constitute the only imaginable method of natural action that would do this. The continued individuality running through successive Karmic rebirths once realized, and the corresponding chain of spiritual existences intercalated between each, borne in mind, the exquisite symmetry of the whole system is in no way impaired by that feature which seems obnoxious to criticism at the first glance – the successive baths of oblivion through which the reincarnating spirit has to pass. On the contrary, that oblivion itself is in truth the only condition on which objective life could fairly be started afresh. Few earth-lives are entirely free from shadows, the recollection of which would darken a renewed lease of life for the former personality. And if it is alleged that the forgetfulness in each life, of the last, involves waste of experience and effort, and intellectual acquirements, painfully or laboriously obtained, that objection can

only be raised in forgetfulness of the Devachanic life in which, far from being wasted, such efforts and acquirements are the seeds from which the whole magnificent harvest of spiritual results will be raised. In the same way the longer the esoteric doctrine occupies the mind, the more clearly it is seen that every objection brought against it meets with a ready reply, and only seems an objection from the point of view of imperfect knowledge.

Passing from abstract considerations to others partly interwoven with practical matters, we may compare the esoteric doctrine with the observable facts of Nature in several ways with the view of directly checking its teachings. A spiritual science which has successfully divined the absolute truth must accurately fit the facts of earth whenever it impinges on earth. A religious dogma in flagrant opposition to that which is manifestly truth in respect of geology and astronomy, may find churches and congregations content to nurse it, but is not worth serious philosophical consideration. How then does the esoteric doctrine square with geology and astronomy?

It is not too much to say that it constitutes the only religious system that blends itself easily with the physical truths discovered by modern research in those branches of science. It not only blends itself with, in the sense of tolerating, the nebula hypothesis and the

stratification of rocks, it rushes into the arms of these facts, so to speak, and could not get on without them. It could not get on without the great discoveries of modern biology; and, as a system recommending itself to notice in a scientific age, it could ill afford to dispense with the latest acquisitions of physical geography.

The stratification of the earth's crust is, of course, a plain and visible record of the inter-racial cataclysms. Physical science is emerging from the habits of timidity which its insolent oppression by religious bigotry for fifteen centuries engendered, but it is still a little shy in its relations with dogma, from the mere force of habit. In that way geology has been content to say, such and continents, as their shell-beds testify, must have been more than once submerged below and elevated above the surface of the ocean. It has not yet grown used to the free application of its own materials to speculation which trenches upon religious territory. But surely if geology were required to interpret all its facts into a consistent history of the earth, throwing in the most plausible hypotheses it could invent to fill up gaps in its knowledge, it would already construct a history for mankind which in its broad outlines would not be unlike that sketched out in the foregoing chapter on the Great World Periods; and the further geological discovery progresses, our esoteric teachers assure us, the more closely will the

correspondence of the doctrine and the bony traces of the past be recognized. Already we find experts from the *Challenger* vouching for the existence of Atlantis, though the subject belongs to a class of problems unattractive to the scientific world generally, so that the considerations in favour of the lost continent are not yet generally appreciated. Already thoughtful geologists are quite ready to recognize that in regard to the forces which have fashioned the earth, this, the period within the range of historic traces, may be a period of comparative inertia and slow change; that cataclysmal metamorphoses may have been added formerly to those of gradual subsidence, upheaval, and denudation. It is only a step or two to the recognition as a fact, of what no one could any longer find fault with as a hypothesis, that great continental upheavals and submergences take place alternately; that the whole map of the world is not only thrown occasionally into new shapes, like the pictures of a kaleidoscope as its coloured fragments fall into new arrangements, but subject to systematically recurrent changes, which restore former arrangements at enormous intervals of time.

Pending further discoveries, however, it will, perhaps, be admitted that we have a sufficient block of geological knowledge already in our possession to fortify the cosmogony of the esoteric doctrine. That

the doctrine should have been withheld from the world generally as long as no such knowledge had paved the way for its reception can hardly be considered indiscreet for the part of its custodians. Whether the present generation will attach sufficient importance to its correspondence with what has been ascertained of Nature in other ways remains to be seen.

These correspondences may, of course, be traced in biology as decisively as in geology. The broad Darwinian theory of the Descent of Man from the animal kingdom is not the only support afforded by this branch of science to the esoteric doctrine. The detailed observations now carried out in embryology are especially interesting for the light they throw on more than one department of this doctrine. Thus the now familiar truth that the successive stages of antenatal human development correspond to the progress of human evolution through different forms of animal life, is nothing less than a revelation, in its analogical bearings. It does not merely fortify the evolutionary hypothesis itself, it affords a remarkable illustration of the way Nature works in the evolution of new races of men at the beginning of the great round-periods. When a child has to be developed from a germ which is so simple in its constitution that it is typical less of the animal – less even of the vegetable – than of the mineral kingdom, the familiar

scale of evolution is run over, so to speak, with a rapid touch. The ideas of progress which may have taken countless ages to work out in a connected chain for the first time, are once for all firmly lodged in Nature's memory, and thenceforth they can be quickly recalled in order in a few months. So with the new evolution of humanity on each planet as the human tide-wave of life advances. In the first round the process is exceedingly slow, and does not advance far. The ideas of Nature are themselves under evolution. But when the process has been accomplished once, it can be quickly repeated. In the later rounds the life-impulse runs up the gamut of evolution with a facility only conceivable by help of the illustration which embryology affords. This is the explanation of the way the character of each round differs from its predecessor. The evolutionary work which has been once accomplished is soon repeated; then the round performs its own evolution at a very different rate, as the child, once perfected up to the human type, performs its own individual growth but slowly, in proportion to the earlier stages of its initial development.

No elaborate comparison of exoteric Buddhism with the views of Nature, which have now been set forth – briefly indeed, considering their scope and importance, but comprehensively enough to furnish the reader with a general idea of the system in its

whole enormous range – will be required from me. With the help of the information now communicated, more experienced students of Buddhist literature will be better able to apply to the enigmas that may contain, the keys which will unlock their meaning. The gaps in the public records of Buddha's teaching will be filled up readily enough now, and it will be plain why they were left. For example, in Mr Rhys Davids' book, I find this: "Buddhism does not attempt to solve the problem of the primary origin of all things;" and quoting from Hardy's "*Manual of Buddhism*," he goes on, "When Malunka asked the Buddha whether the existence of the world is eternal or not eternal, he made him no reply; but the reason of this was that it was considered by the teacher as an inquiry that tended to no profit." In reality the subject was manifestly passed over because it could not be dealt with by a plain yes or no, without putting the inquirer upon a false scent; while to put him on the true scent would have required a complete exposition of the whole doctrine about the evolution of the planetary chain, an explanation of that for which the community Buddha was dealing with, was not intellectually ripe. To infer from his silence that he regarded the inquiry itself as tending to no profit, is a mistake which may naturally enough have been made in the absence of any collateral knowledge, but none can be more complete

in reality. No religious system that ever publicly employed itself on the problem of the origin of all things, has, as will now be seen, done more than scratch the surface of that speculation, in comparison with the exhaustive researches of the esoteric science of which Buddha was no less prominent an exponent than he was a prominent teacher of morals for the populace.

The positive conclusions as to what Buddhism does teach – carefully as he has worked them out – are no less inaccurately set forth by Mr Rhys Davids than the negative conclusion just quoted. It was inevitable that all such conclusions should hitherto be inaccurate. I quote an example, not to disparage the careful study of which it is the fruit, but to show how the light now shed over the whole subject penetrates every cranny, and puts an entirely new complexion on all its features.

"Buddhism takes as its ultimate fact the existence of the material world, and of conscious beings, living within it; and it holds that everything is subject to the law of cause and effect, and that everything is constantly, though imperceptibly, changing. There is no place where this law does not operate; no heaven or hell therefore in the ordinary sense. There are worlds where angels live whose existence is more or less material according as their previous lives were more or

less holy; but the angels die, and the worlds they inhabit pass away. There are places of torment where the evil actions of men or angels produce unhappy beings; but when the active power of the evil that produced them is exhausted, they will vanish, and the worlds they inhabit are not eternal. The whole Kosmos – earth and heavens, and hells – is always tending to renovation or destruction, is always in a course of change, a series of revolutions or of cycles, of which the beginning and the end alike are unknowable and unknown. To this universal law of composition and dissolution, men and gods form no exception; the unity of forces which constitutes a sentient being must sooner or later be dissolved, and it is only through ignorance and delusion that such a being indulges in the dream that it is a separable and self-existent entity."

Now, certainly this passage might be taken to show how the popular notions of Buddhist philosophy are manifestly thrown off from the real esoteric philosophy. Most assuredly that philosophy no more finds in the universe than in the belief of any truly enlightened thinker – Asiatic or European – the unchangeable and eternal heaven and hell of monkish legend; and "the worlds where angels live," and so on – the vividly real though subjective strata of the Devachanic state – *are* found in Nature truly enough.

So with all the rest of the popular Buddhist conceptions just passed in review. But in their popular form they are the nearest caricatures of the corresponding items of esoteric knowledge. Thus the notion about individuality being a delusion, and the *ultimate* dissolution as such of the sentient being, is perfectly unintelligible without fuller explanations concerning the multitudinous æons of individual life, in as yet, to us, inconceivable, but ever progressive, conditions of spiritual exaltation, which come before that unutterably remote mergence into the non-individualized condition. That condition certainly must be somewhere in futurity, but its nature is something which no uninitiated philosopher, at any rate, has ever yet comprehended by so much as the faintest glimmering guess. As with the idea of Nirvana, so with this about the delusion of individuality, writers on Buddhist doctrine derived from exoteric sources, have most unfortunately found themselves entangled with some of the remote elements of the great doctrine, under the impression that they were dealing with Buddhist views of conditions immediately succeeding this life, The statement, which is almost absurd, thus put out of its proper place in the whole doctrine, may be felt, not only as no longer an outrage on the understanding, but as a sublime truth, when restored to its proper place in relation to other truths. The ultimate

mergence of the perfect Man-god or Dhyān Chohan in the absolute consciousness of paranirvāna, has nothing to do, let me add, with the "heresy of individuality," which relates to physical personalities. To this subject I recur a little later on.

Justly enough, Mr Rhys Davids says, in reference to the epitome of Buddhist doctrine quoted above: "Such teachings are by no means peculiar to Buddhism, and similar ideas lie at the foundation of earlier Indian philosophies." (Certainly by reason of the fact that Buddhism, as concerned with doctrine, was earlier Indian philosophy itself.) "They are to be found indeed in other systems widely separated from them in time and place; and Buddhism, in dealing with the truth which they contain, might have given a more decisive and more lasting utterance, if it had not also borrowed a belief in the curious doctrine of transmigration, a doctrine which seems to have arisen independently, if not simultaneously, in the Valley of the Ganges and the Valley of the Nile. The word transmigration has been used, however, in different times and at different places for theories similar, indeed, but very different; and Buddhism, in adopting the general idea from post-Vedic Brahminism, so modified it as to originate, in fact, a new hypothesis. The new hypothesis, like the old one, related to life in past and future births, and contributed nothing to the removal here, in this life, of the evil it was supposed to

explain."

The present volume should have dissipated the misapprehensions on which these remarks rest. Buddhism does not believe in anything resembling the passage backwards and forwards between animal and human forms, which most people conceive to be meant by the principle of transmigration. The transmigration of Buddhism is the transmigration of Darwinian evolution scientifically developed, or rather exhaustively explored, in both directions. Buddhist writings certainly contain allusions to former births, in which even the Buddha himself was now one and now another kind of animal. But these had reference to the remote course of pre-human evolution, of which his fully opened vision gave him a retrospect. Never in any authentic Buddhist writings will any support be found for the notion that any human creature, once having attained manhood, falls back into the animal kingdom. Again, while nothing indeed could be more ineffectual as an explanation of the origin of evil, than such a caricature of transmigration as would contemplate such a return, the progressive rebirths of human Egos into objective existence, coupled with the operation of physical Karma, and the inevitable play of free-will within the limits of its privilege, do explain the origin of evil, finally and completely. The effort of Nature being to grow a new harvest of Dhyān Chohans whenever a planetary system is

evolved, the incidental development of transitory evil is an unavoidable consequence under the operation of the forces of processes just mentioned, themselves unavoidable stages in the stupendous enterprise set on foot.

At the same time the reader, who will now take up Mr Rhys Davids book and examine the long passage on this subject, and on the *skandhas*, will realize how utterly hopeless a task it was to attempt the deduction of any rational theory of the origin of evil from the exoteric materials there made use of. Nor was it possible for these materials to suggest the true explanation of the passage immediately afterwards quoted from the Brahmajala Sutra: –

"After showing how the unfounded belief in the eternal existence of God or gods arose, Gautama goes on to discuss the question of the soul, and points out thirty-two beliefs concerning it, which he declares to be wrong. These are shortly as follows: 'Upon what principle or on what ground, do these mendicants and Brahmans hold the doctrine of future existence? They teach that the soul is material, or is immaterial, or is both or neither; that it will have one or many modes of consciousness; that its perceptions will be few or boundless; that it will be in a state of joy or of misery or of neither. These are the sixteen heresies, teaching a conscious existence after death. Then there are eight heresies teaching that the soul material or immaterial, or both or neither, finite or infinite, or

both or neither, has one unconscious existence after death. And, finally, eight others which teach that the soul, in the same eight ways, exists after death in a state of being neither conscious nor unconscious. Mendicants,' concludes the sermon, 'that which binds the teacher to existence (*viz. tanha*, thirst) is cut off, but his body still remains. While his body shall remain, he will be seen by gods and men, but after the termination of life, upon the dissolution of the body, neither gods nor men will see him.' Would it be possible in a more complete and categorical manner to deny that there is any soul "anything of any kind which continues to exist in any manner after death?"

Certainly, for exoteric students, such a passage as this could not but seem in flagrant contradiction with those teachings of Buddhism which deal with the successive passages of the same individuality through several incarnations, and which thus along another line of thought may seem to assume the existence of a transmissible soul, as plainly as the passage quoted denies it. Without a comprehension of the seven principles of man, no separate utterances on the various aspects of this question of immortality could possibly be reconciled. But the key now given leaves the apparent contradiction devoid of all embarrassment. In the passage last quoted Buddha is speaking of the astral personality, while the immortality recognized by the esoteric doctrine is that of the spiritual individuality. The explanation has been fully given in the chapter on Devachan, and in

the passages quoted there from Colonel Olcott's "*Buddhist Catechism*." It is only since fragments of the great revelation this volume contains have been given out during the last two years in *The Theosophist* [magazine], that the important distinction between personality and individuality, as applied to the question of human immortality, has settled into an intelligible shape; but there are plentiful allusions in former occult writing, which may now be appealed to in proof of the fact that former writers were fully alive to the doctrine itself. Turning to the most recent of the occult books in which the veil of obscurity was still left to wrap the doctrine from careless observation, though it was strained in many places almost to transparency, we might take any one of a dozen passages to illustrate the point before us. Here is one: —

"The philosophers who explained the fall into generation their own way, viewed spirit as something wholly distinct from the soul. They allowed its presence in the astral capsule only so far as the spiritual emanations or rays of the "shining one" were concerned. Man and soul had to conquer their immortality by ascending toward the unity, with which, if successful, they were finally linked, and into which they were absorbed, so to say. The individualization of man after death depended on the

spirit, not on his body and soul. Although the word 'personality' in the sense in which it is usually understood, is an absurdity if applied literally to our immortal essence, still the latter is a distinct entity, immortal and eternal per se, and as in the case of criminals beyond redemption, when the shining thread which links the spirit to the soul from the moment of the birth of a child, is violently snapped, and the disembodied entity is left to share the fate of the lower animals, to dissolve into ether, and have its individuality annihilated – even then the spirit remains a distinct being." [*Isis Unveiled*," volume 1, Page 315.]

No one can read this, scarcely any part, indeed, of the chapter from which it is taken, without perceiving, by the light of the explanations given in the present volume, that the esoteric doctrine, now fully given out, was perfectly familiar to the writer, though I have been privileged to put it for the first time into plain and unmistakable language. for the continuity of personal existence, for the full recollection always of those transitory circumstances of our present physical life which make up the personality, is manifestly no more than a passing weakness of the flesh. For many people it will perhaps remain irrational to say that any person now living, with his recollections bounded by the years of his

childhood, is the same individual as some one of quite a different nationality and epoch who lived thousands of years ago, or the same that will reappear after a similar lapse of time under some entirely new conditions in the future. But the feeling "I am I," is the same through the three lives, and through all the hundreds; for that feeling is more deeply seated than the feeling, "I am John Smith, so high, so heavy, with such and such property and relations." Is it inconceivable, as a notion in the mind, that John Smith, inheriting the gift of Tithonus, changing his name from time to time, marrying afresh every other generation or so, losing property here, coming into possession of property there, and getting interested as time went on in a great variety of different pursuits, is it inconceivable that such a person in a few thousand years should forget all circumstances connected with the present life of John Smith, just as if the incidents of that life for him had never taken place? And yet the Ego would be the same. If this is conceivable in the imagination, what can be inconceivable in the individual continuity of an *intermittent life*, interrupted and renewed at regular intervals, and varied with passages through a purer condition of existence.

No less than it clears up the apparent conflict between the identify of successive individualities and

the "heresy" of individuality, will the esoteric doctrine be seen to put the "incomprehensible mystery" of Karma, which Mr Rhys Davids disposes of so summarily, on a perfectly intelligible and scientific basis. Of this he says that because Buddhism "does not acknowledge a soul," it has to resort to the desperate expedient of a mystery to bridge over the gulf between one life and another somewhere else, the doctrine, namely, of Karma. And he condemns the idea as a "non-existent fiction of the brain." Irritated as he feels with what he regards as the absurdity of the doctrine, he yet applies patience and great mental ingenuity in the effort to evolve something that shall feel like a rational metaphysical conception out of the tangled utterances concerning Karma of the Buddhist scriptures. He writes:

"Karma, from a Buddhist point of view, avoids the superstitious extreme, on the one hand, of those who believe in the separate existence of some entity called the soul; and the irreligious extreme on the other of those who do not believe in moral justice and retribution. Buddhism claims to have looked through the word soul for the fact it purports to cover, and to have found no fact at all, but only one or other of twenty different delusions which blind the eyes of men. Nevertheless, Buddhism is convinced that if a man reaps sorrow, disappointment, pain, he himself and no other must at some time have sown folly, error,

sin, and if not in this life, then in some former birth. Where, then, in the latter case, is the identity between him who sows and him who reaps? In that which alone remains when a man dies, and the constituent parts of the sentient being are dissolved, in the result, namely, of his action, speech, and thought, in his good or evil Karma (literally his doing), which does not die. We are familiar with the doctrine, 'Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,' and can therefore enter into the Buddhist feeling that whatever a man reaps that he must also have sown; we are familiar with the doctrine of the indestructibility of force, and can therefore understand the Buddhist dogma (however it may contravene our Christian notions) that no exterior power can destroy the fruit of a man's deeds, that they must work out their full effect to the pleasant or the bitter end. But the peculiarity of Buddhism lies in this, that the result of what a man is or does is held not to be dissipated, as it were, into many separate streams, but to be concentrated together in the formation of one new sentient being – new, that is, in its constituent parts and powers, but the same in its essence, its being, its doing, its Karma."

Nothing could be more ingenious as an attempt to invent for Buddhism an explanation of its "mystery" on the assumption that the authors of the mystery threw it up originally as a "desperate expedient" to cover their retreat from an untenable position. But in

reality the doctrine of Karma has a far simpler history, and does not need so subtle an interpretation. Like many other phenomena of Nature having to do with futurity, it was declared by Buddha an incomprehensible mystery, and questions concerning it were thus put aside, but he did not mean that because it was incomprehensible for the populace, it was incomprehensible or any mystery at all for the initiates in the esoteric doctrine. It was impossible to explain it without reference to the esoteric doctrine, but the outlines of that science once grasped, Karma, like so much else, becomes a comparatively simple matter, a mystery only in the sense in which also the affinity of sulphuric acid for copper, and its superior affinity for iron, are also mysteries. Certainly esoteric science for its "lay chelas" at all events, like chemical science for its lay chelas – all students, that is to say, of its mere physical phenomena – leaves some mysteries unfathomed in the background. I am not prepared to explain by what precise molecular changes the higher affinities which constitute Karma are stored up in the permanent elements of the fifth principle. But no more is ordinary science qualified to say what it is in a molecule of oxygen, which induces it to desert the molecule of hydrogen with which it was in alliance in the raindrop, and attach itself to a molecule of the iron of a railing on which it falls. But the speck of rust is engendered, and a scientific

explanation of that occurrence is held to have been given when its affinities are ascertained and appealed to.

So with Karma, the fifth principle takes up the affinities of its good and evil deeds in its passage through life, passes with them into Devachan, where those which are suitable to the atmosphere, so to speak, of that state, fructify and blossom in prodigious abundance, and then passes on, with such as have not yet exhausted their energy, into the objective world once more. And as certainly as the molecule of oxygen brought into the presence of a hundred other molecules will fly to that with which it has the most affinity, so will the Karma-laden spiritual monad fly to that incarnation with which its mysterious attractions link it. Nor is there in that process any creation of a new sentient being, except in the sense that the new bodily structure evolved is a new instrument of sensation. That which inhabits it, that which feels joy or sorrow, is the old Ego – walled off by forgetfulness from its last set of adventures on earth, it is true, but reaping their fruit nevertheless – the same "I am I" as before.

"Strange it is," Mr Rhys Davids thinks, that "all this," the explanation of Buddhist philosophy which esoteric materials have enabled him to give, "should have seemed not unattractive, these 2300 years and

more, to many despairing and earnest hearts – that they should have trusted themselves to the so seeming stately bridge which Buddhism has tried to build over the river of the mysteries and sorrows of life... They have failed to see that the very keystone itself, the link between one life and another, is a mere word – this wonderful hypothesis, this airy nothing, this imaginary cause beyond the reach of reason – the individualized and individualizing grace of Karma."

It would have been strange indeed if Buddhism had been built on such a frail foundation; but its apparent frailty has been simply due to the fact that its mighty fabric of knowledge has hitherto been veiled from view. Now that the inner doctrine has been unveiled, it will be seen how little it depends for any item of its belief on shadowy subtleties of metaphysics. So far as these have clustered round Buddhism they have merely been constructed by external interpreters of stray doctrinal hints that could not be entirely left out of the simple system of morals prescribed for the populace.

In that which really constitutes Buddhism we find a sublime simplicity, like that of Nature herself – one law running into infinite ramifications – complexities of detail, it is true, as Nature herself is infinitely complex in her manifestations, however unchangeably uniform in her purposes, but always the immutable

doctrine of causes and their effects, which in turn become causes again in an endless cyclic progression.



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Mr. Sinnett's statement that our humanity has passed through Mars and will continue on to Mercury is very much in need of reevaluation. A short time after publication, it became apparent that this explanation did not fit with the occult axiom, as above, so it is below. The Secret Doctrine, published five years later, drew attention to the discrepancy, and laid the blame upon vagueness in correspondence, and the gap between eastern and western terminology, coupled with the obvious fact that the entire doctrine could not be given out *carte blanche* to an uninitiated westerner.

Try to understand that you are putting to me questions pertaining to the highest initiation; that I can give you (only) a general view, but that I dare not nor will I enter upon details I wrote one of the Teachers to the author of Esoteric Buddhism.

The letter quoted was among those collected from Mr. Sinnett's estate-and published by Rider and Co. in 1923, as *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, transcribed and compiled by A. Trevor Barker. In his appendix to that work, after reviewing two opinions by Annie Besant, Mr Barker continues as follows: –

Attention has been drawn to the fact that Mme. Blavatsky was not accurate in her quotation of the Master's letter to the extent that she added the word etc. and omitted the word yet – and there are some

who would like to convince themselves and others that this fact is sufficient to invalidate the whole of H.P.B.'s exposition of the teaching regarding the nature of the septenary Planetary Chains. It should be evident to every student that in reality, at the worst, this misquotation invalidates the hypothesis which Mme. Blavatsky offered as a possible explanation of Mr. Sinnett's misunderstanding, and it leaves untouched the doctrine of the septenary Chain with one physical Globe which is implied in every line of The Secret Doctrine and is in fact an integral part of the esoteric philosophy.

As stated over and over again and from every point of view in these pages of The Secret Doctrine, neither Mars nor Mercury belong to our Chain. They are along with other planets, Septenary Units in the Great host of Chains of our System and all are as visible as their upper Globes are invisible.

Again: –

The one Eternal Law unfolds everything in the to be manifested Nature, on a sevenfold principle; among the rest, the countless circular Chains of worlds composed of seven Globes, graduated on the four lower planes of the World of Formation, the three others belonging to the Archetypal Universe. Out of these seven only one, the lowest and the most material of these Globes, is within our plane or means

of perception, the six others lying outside it and being therefore invisible to the terrestrial eye. To make it clearer; we are told that each of the planets, of which seven only were called sacred, as being ruled by the highest Regents or Gods, is a septenary, as also is the Chain to which the Earth belongs, while the superior fellow Globes of these planets are on other planes quite outside that of our terrestrial senses. These invisible companions correspond curiously to that which we call the principles" in man. The seven are on three material planes and one spiritual plane, but it may be stated that our satellite is only the gross body of its invisible principles. Seeing then that there are seven Earths, so there are seven Moons, the last alone being visible. The same for the Sun, whose visible body is called a Maya, a reflection, just as man's body is. The real Sun and the real Moon are as invisible as the real man, says an occult axiom.

Could words be plainer? Hardly – and yet for over thirty years the Theosophical Society has permitted itself to spread this misleading superstition, preferring to assume that it was Madame Blavatsky who did not understand what she was writing about. The mystery is after all as clear as it well nigh can be. The septenary Chains of Globes about which Theosophical textbooks talk so much, are seven principled Units, each having a physical body and six higher or subtler principles invisible to the ordinary senses, but

coexisting and inter-penetrating each other.

Students of Astrology at least are able to prove for themselves that the correspondence between man and a planet is exact; for just as the six invisible principles of a planet correspond to the six invisible principles in man, so do the seven sacred Planets correspond to the whole of the seven principles of our Earth and therefore of man. How then is it possible that the theory, which credits the Earth Chain with three physical planets, can be correct from any point of view? It is manifestly ridiculous, because if it were true, it would mean by the occult law of correspondence, that man also must have three physical bodies which is an absurdity, and proves the whole theory false from beginning to end.

The publication of these letters gives to the student an opportunity to examine the whole range of Theosophic teaching in their light-while adding thereto the faculty of criticism-the highest and most discriminative of which he is capable. That faculty is an impersonal one; it is neither critic nor respecter of persons-for to it persons are without significance. But with ideas-with doctrines, it has everything to do, and if it is inevitable that the use of that faculty by students the world over will reveal many discrepancies in the accepted Theosophical doctrines of the day, it is equally certain that a large part of that teaching will

receive a confirmation which cannot be gainsaid.