

THE SEVEN VEILS
OVER CONSCIOUSNESS

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BY

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TO

THE ADEPT

who inspired H.P.B. when writing *Isis Unveiled*, and who at the conclusion of the work, in the second paragraph before the last, wrote:

“It but needs the right perception of things objective to finally discover that the only world of reality is the subjective.”

THE SEVEN VEILS OVER CONSCIOUSNESS

THIS thesis contains many statements which by their very nature cannot be proved. Nevertheless I consider it is my most original contribution to Theosophical knowledge. I realize that very few will understand it, but I desire to put it on record as what I have thought and lived for over forty years.

During the last four decades, a great development has taken place in our Theosophical conceptions, due to an emphasis laid upon the idea of the Monad. The Monad is mentioned in many places in *The Secret Doctrine*. But the emphasis laid on the Monad by Dr. Besant in her *A Study in Consciousness* is one of the most valuable contributions to Theosophical knowledge. More and more, then, we are learning in our studies to look at the problem of the evolution of an individual less from the standpoint of the Ego in the causal body and more from that of the Monad.

When we regard the individual as the Monad, the next inevitable step is to recognize the Monad as a fragment of the Divine Consciousness of the Logos; and that so far as the Logos of the Solar System is concerned, in a mysterious way we live in Him and are a part of Him. That does not mean that we have not also our direct road, so to say, to the Universal Logos. But, putting aside that latter mystery, one thing is clear: that, at the stage of evolution where we are, we grow by means of the energies of the Solar Logos. This process of our evolution can be envisaged as a drama which the Logos creates for the Monad; it is by understanding the drama which the Logos so creates that we unfold the Divinity within us.

How does the Logos create for us a drama in which we are to be actors, and in the performance of which we are to grow into the image of the Logos Himself? This is done by the Logos by creating forms. Hence there comes into manifestation our universe of activity, which is, for us, the solar system. The Logos creates in it plane after plane;

we describe that action as the outpourings of the Third Logos and of the Second Logos.

Now, the creation by the Logos of the various planes is, viewed from one angle of vision, a revelation of consciousness, because the Logos is, in His essence, Supreme Consciousness. When therefore He creates a plane, whether it is the Ādi plane or one lower, that plane is an expression of His consciousness, but *veiled*. If we study what is described in *Occult Chemistry* concerning the formation of the plane, we shall note that each plane persists because the consciousness of the Logos holds it. The "bubbles in Koilon" are held by the consciousness of the Logos in this or that formation; but if the attention of the Logos were to be relaxed, all the planes would cease to be. Furthermore, I would mention incidentally—though it is important—that the very bubble, which is made in the Koilon, is itself a manifestation of the consciousness of the Universal Logos. The seven planes within the Solar System are therefore fundamentally

aspects or revelations of the consciousness of the Solar Logos.

Beginning with the highest, the Ādi Plane, we find that it is an aspect of the consciousness of the Logos; but it is His consciousness *Veiled*. When one veil covers His consciousness, we call the result the Ādi Plane. Similarly, each plane means that one more veil is added to His consciousness; so that when we descend, for instance, towards the mental plane, already four veils—Ādi, Anupādaka, Nirvānic, Buddhic—have been put over His consciousness, and the mental plane is an additional fifth veil over that consciousness. The astral plane is the sixth veil, and the physical plane the seventh.

We know already from science that, when we deal with matter, matter is after all a veil put over force. Every particle of matter in reality is a series of forces; matter, as substance, does not exist. Matter is a veil put over force. In exactly the same way, science will in a future day come to the discovery that what is called force is itself a mode of consciousness, a veil over consciousness.

It is with this truth that we should start in Theosophy, for a true understanding of everything. In our conception of the Logos and of His relation to the seven planes, we must start with the axiom that all matter is an expression of His consciousness. But since there are grades of matter from plane to plane, all the planes are modifications of consciousness, that is to say, one to seven veils put over that primordial consciousness. When, therefore, the seven planes are created, we have, from one angle, seven types of matter; but from another angle, we have seven veils put over His consciousness.

Now into this series of seven worlds, the Logos sends the Monad to play his part in the great drama; and the drama consists of movements by forms made by the Logos. A plane is, in reality, a thought-form of the Logos; and every object in each plane is similarly a thought-form of the Logos. This chair in which I am sitting only persists because the Logos holds it as a thought-form.

All the experiences, then, which we gain in evolution are adventures among the

thought-forms of the Logos. When we contact the physical plane and its seeming substantiality, in reality we are contacting the thought-forms of the Logos; but they are His thought-forms enveloped in seven veils, physical matter being the last veil. We play out our drama, then, in the magnificent world of the consciousness of the Logos, but that consciousness is veiled at various stages.

From the standpoint that each plane is a veil over the consciousness of the Logos, each higher plane means that there is one veil less. If we have seven veils over the consciousness of the Logos when we are on the physical plane, then, the moment we begin to function in the astral world, we contact the consciousness of the Logos with one veil less. What I desire specially to emphasize is that each world to which we rise in consciousness means that we see the nature of the Logos, and the modes of His activities, minus one more veil.

Into this system of the worlds of veils, we make our entrance as Monads to undergo our experiences. Our action in the drama takes place on the various planes where we

can function. On the Monadic plane, we function as Monads in a way that we cannot now fully grasp in our brains; but nevertheless we function. On the Monadic plane, we observe our Brother Monads. The same drama is affecting them and us.

But there are several modes of observing our Brother Monads. We can, for instance, observe them as they function in causal bodies on the mental plane; but for that we must ourselves descend to the mental plane. The moment we descend to the mental plane, we partake of those veils which have been put over the consciousness of the Logos. Our own consciousness becomes veiled when we come to the mental plane; and it is through those veils that we look at our Brother Monads who are similarly veiled. When we descend to the astral plane, both of us, the observer and the observed, have one more veil over our true nature; and on the physical plane, each of us has seven veils. We look at each other, as in the phrase of St. Paul, as "through a glass, darkly".

Each vehicle, then, which we as Monads put on, means the loss of one dimension,

using a mathematical term. Just as a cube with its three dimensions, if it is forced to work on a plane with only two dimensions, loses so to say its three-dimensional quality and is only a square, so similarly, the Ego in the causal body, when it descends to the astral world, has already lost one gamut or octave of manifestation of its thoughts and feelings. And when it descends to the physical plane into incarnation, it has lost yet another octave. The physical embodiment, then, of the Monad is relatively small, compared to the magnificence which remains on higher planes.

When we come into incarnation we are veiled seven times; that means that we have to observe the thought-form of the Logos, which is the physical world, through those seven veils. Our discovery of Reality, our liberation, our evolution, call it what you will, consists in penetrating through those seven veils and seeing Reality as it is without them.

This unfoldment takes place for us in the main from below upwards. I say "in the main", because there must also be *pari passu*

an unfoldment of the Monad from above downwards; but of that we know little. In the main, then, our evolution consists in coming down into matter, and by contact with it slowly ridding ourselves of one veil after another.

Let us now look from this standpoint at the work that we do. Here we are on the physical plane, and to us here all objects—men, animals, plants, mountain ranges and seas—all these things appear to be substantial, that is, composed of matter. But they are in reality the consciousness of the Logos covered by veils. Our vision of a person on the physical plane, when we look at his face or listen to his voice, is a vision of the Divine Being who is the Soul's individuality beyond the veils. When we look at a person, whether he is a total stranger or a bosom friend, we are looking at a mystery. In one whom we consider a friend, we are able to penetrate through certain of the veils which enwrap him, and see something of his nature as Monad. In one whom we consider a stranger we have not yet discovered the way of piercing through his veils to the Monad. On the

physical plane, then, we are all the time dealing with objects, whether individuals or things, which are seven times veiled.

When at night we go to the astral plane, our consciousness functions in a realm where one of the seven veils has been cast aside. The astral world consciousness brings us, therefore, one stage nearer to reality; at whatever object we look, whether it is the tiniest atom or the most magnificent of beings, we are looking at the consciousness of the Logos with one veil less than on the physical plane. Not only that, we ourselves when living in the astral world are minus one veil. Whatever is the object we observe, our observation of it brings us therefore a step nearer Reality.

Consider, for instance, the individual who lives on the astral plane and from there looks at the physical plane. He is not able to see the physical plane in terms of those light quanta which affect our retina. He sees the physical plane only by the astral correspondences of physical light. He sees, as we say, the astral counterpart of the physical. Now, the astral counterpart and the physical object are both thought-forms

of the Logos. But the astral counterpart has this advantage over the physical, that it is characterized by having one veil less of the Logos enveloping it. Therefore, along this line of theorizing in which I am indulging now, an individual by the mere fact that he lives in the astral world, has come one stage nearer Reality. Whether he contemplates a mountain range or a sunset or a person, he sees each object, which is essentially a thought-form of the Logos, more purely and more clearly, because on that plane all thought-forms of the Logos have one veil less than they have on the physical plane.

Let us continue this manner of thinking one stage further. When we proceed to live in the mental world, we are dealing with the consciousness of the Logos minus two veils; everything that we contemplate there reveals a new quality, because we ourselves as observers have two veils less, and similarly each thought-form of the Logos which we observe has two veils less. Let me illustrate by a single example. I am wearing at this moment glasses that are colourless, for it is evening. I see everything as

does the normal person. But I am a victim of sunstroke, and am liable to sunstroke through an abnormal sensitiveness of my eyes. I do not, therefore, during the day wear glasses with colourless lenses; my usual glasses have Crookes A lenses. They are supposed to cut down the intensity of the sun's rays by seventeen per cent. Unless you knew, you would not notice that they were not ordinary lenses. They do, however, cut down luminosity; therefore, whenever I am to be photographed, I must remove them and put on glasses with colourless lenses, as otherwise the photograph is slightly darker round my eyes. When the sunlight is very powerful, as at noon in tropical lands, I must, in order to avoid sunstroke, use Crookes B 2 lenses. They cut off thirty-five per cent of the light; they are almost black lenses. When I wear the special lenses, whether A or B 2, all the colours are reduced in luminosity. Yet I can distinguish red from green, and I do not notice that the world is different. I get quickly accustomed to the state of minus 17 per cent or 35 per cent of light; I am thoroughly at home in my darkened world.

But the moment I take off my B 2 lenses and put on A lenses, I notice at once a difference. There is greater luminosity, though the colours are the same. The important point to note is that in spite of the very dark glasses, the proportions of light and shade, and the gradations and variations of colour, are undisturbed. But there is no question whatsoever that light is more luminous without them. I am nearer the true vision of nature when I remove Crookes B 2 and put on Crookes A glasses. Similarly, when I put aside Crookes A glasses and put on a pair of plain lenses, I have a more correct conception still of what is light and shade, and of the true intensities of colour.

In exactly the same way, the mere fact that after death we begin to function in the Heaven World means that we have arrived two stages nearer Reality, which is the true nature of the Logos. It is because we have come two stages nearer the true nature of the Logos that we experience the characteristic quality of the Heaven World. This quality has been graphically described in the Manual on the Heaven World,

The Devachanic Plane. As I quote you the characteristics of the mental plane, I want you to note that we are dealing with Reality, but Reality minus the two veils of the astral and physical worlds.

THE BLISS OF THE HEAVEN-WORLD

“ This intensity of bliss is the first great idea which must form a background to all our conceptions of the heaven-life. It is not only that we are dealing with a world in which, by its very constitution, evil and sorrow are impossible; it is not only a world in which every creature is happy; the facts of the case go far beyond all that. It is a world in which every being must, from the very fact of his presence there, be enjoying the highest spiritual bliss of which he is capable—a world whose power of response to his aspirations is limited only by his capacity to aspire.

“ Here for the first time we begin to grasp something of the true nature of the great Source of Life; here for the first time we catch a far-away glimpse of what the Logos must be, and of what He means us to be. And when the stupendous reality of it all bursts upon our astonished vision, we cannot but feel that, with this knowledge of the truth, life can never again look to us as it did before. We cannot but marvel at the hopeless inadequacy of all the worldly man’s ideas of happiness; indeed, we cannot avoid seeing that most

of them are absurdly inverted and impossible of realization, and that for the most part he has actually turned his back upon the very goal which he is seeking. But here at last is truth and beauty, far transcending all that ever poet dreamed; and in the light of its surpassing glory all other joy seems dim and faint, unreal and unsatisfying.

“Some detail of all this we must endeavour to make clear later on; the point to be emphasized for the moment is that this radiant sense, not only of the welcome absence of all evil and discord, but of the insistent, overwhelming presence of universal joy, is the first and most striking sensation experienced by him who enters upon the heaven-world. And it never leaves him so long as he remains there; whatever work he may be doing, whatever still higher possibilities of spiritual exaltation may arise before him as he learns more of the capabilities of this new world in which he finds himself, the strange indescribable feeling of inexpressible delight in mere existence in such a realm underlies all else—this enjoyment of the abounding joy of others is ever present with him. Nothing on earth is like it, nothing can image it; if one could suppose the bounding life of childhood carried up into our spiritual experience and then intensified many thousand-fold, perhaps some faint shadow of an idea of it might be suggested; yet even such a simile falls miserably short of that which lies beyond all words—the tremendous spiritual vitality of this celestial world.” (*G. W. Leadbeater*).

So, when we live in the Heaven World, we look at Reality minus two veils. If I have in my Heaven World a friend whom I love, I see him minus two veils. As I know my friend here below, he and I are both veiled. I loved him when on earth; but when later after death I enter the Heaven World, then I shall see him minus two veils, and he will reveal to me certain attributes of himself, which by the very nature of the physical plane it was impossible for him to reveal in their fullness.

Now, the question has been asked in Theosophical studies, whether, when we come into the Heaven World, we are not fundamentally dealing with an illusion, whether there is not an illusory quality in Heaven. Now, our sense of reality is not dependent so much on the plane on which we function, as upon our reaction to that plane. This evening there was a most wonderful sunset.¹ But how many among the people who crossed the bridge felt the sunset's full inspiration?

¹ This was at Adyar. Looking towards the west from verandah of the roof of the Headquarters Building.

As I gazed at the sunset from the upper balcony it awoke in me a deep spiritual realization. Did it awaken a similar realization in the people who crossed the bridge? Probably not. The sunset is the same for all, but the reaction of each to it is different. Probably those who crossed the bridge were wrapped up in various cocoons of thought and were self-absorbed. So far as the sunset was concerned, there was no sunset for them, only the coming of night.

When, then, we consider how an individual approaches Reality, we shall find that if he has a friend in his Heaven World, but begins his life there without having developed the ability to penetrate through all the veils which envelop his friend, he will see his friend in only a partial aspect. But if this individual is a developed Soul, then, when he begins to live in the Heaven World, he begins to discover concerning those whom he has with him an intensity of goodness and beauty which he only dimly felt in them when they lived on earth. The reason is that he sees them free of two veils; he finds in them attributes which it was impossible

for him fully to appreciate on the physical plane, however deeply philosophical, loving and aspiring he may have been. For, so long as we are moving about enveloped in a veil of physical matter, certain aspects of Reality escape us, as delicate shades of colour escape me when I wear Crookes B 2 lenses. So I distinctly differ from the usually accepted idea that to go to the Heaven World is to wrap oneself up in a "cocoon", as some Theosophists have suggested. Many Theosophists think that everybody should renounce the Heaven World, for they are under the mistaken idea that to live in the Heaven World is to be in a kind of self-created delusion. They would rather escape Heaven; to live there is a waste of time for them. But the truth is that, however limited may be our understanding of Reality when in the physical body, the very moment we come to live in the Heaven World, then, by the very nature of that world, we are two stages nearer Reality.

This brings us to the important problem whether, when we idealize a person, our conception of him is really an illusion or not. Many people imagine that to idealize a

person is to believe something about him that is not true. We often say, when a mother idealizes her child, that she is utterly foolish and wraps herself up in a delusion. But what is idealism?

From what I hold to be the true standpoint, idealism is the ability to penetrate the veils, and to see something, first, of the Ego, and then something of the Monad. However much we may later lose our ideal vision, owing to various events that are characteristic of the physical plane, the fact that we saw the ideal *once*, means that we have thereby come nearer to the consciousness of the Logos. In the case of the mother, the Logos, too, is thinking of the child as the mother sees her child. For, to idealize is to *think with the Logos*. Certainly the Logos sees the child as a mischievous child, as his detractors see him; but He also sees the child as the perfect child revealing the Monad. The mother who idolizes her child is nearer to the vision of the Logos than the child's detractors, for she is seeing the child *as he is* without some of the veils.

This same fact, that to idealize is to have a fuller glimpse of reality, applies to all. Let me recall those lines in the hymn:

“ The highest hopes we cherish here,
How fast they tire and faint;
How many a spot defiles the robe
That wraps an earthly saint.”

If we lack knowledge, then indeed our hopes “tire and faint”, and we think less of the saint because, after discovering him as the saint, we discover later, that his robe is “defiled”. This happens to us constantly regarding those whom we put upon a pedestal, as is the phrase. When we discover that our statue has feet of clay, we get a shock, and our idealism of the person ceases.

Yet our idealism need not be less, if we understand. For, when we put a person upon a pedestal, it is because we have seen him minus the veils. When we see his clay feet, we see him with the veils. If our love is true, if we love him for his own sake, not for something we ask of him, then we see his Divinity more than his humanity. The discovery of the “spots” on his earthly robe

does not make his Divinity any less. But we need to be supermen never to forget the Vision of the Spirit, when matter insists on claiming our full attention.

It is the same struggle between light and darkness which is referred to in another hymn.

“The roseate hues of early dawn,
The brightness of the day,
The crimson of the sunset sky,
How fast they fade away.”

And yet the truth is that, if we have understood what sunsets and sunrises really are, as glimpses of the beauty and joyousness of Reality, then, when earthly sunsets and sunrises fade away, we do not feel any gloom enveloping us. For, we have seen the real sunset and sunrise, as the Logos sees them always. Certainly all things fade away, and there are “tears in things”. But if before they fade, we penetrate through the veils which envelop them, then the vision of the Reality which is their substratum never ceases to give us its message of beauty and eternity.

I should like to present this whole problem from another angle, that of the Ego in his permanent causal body, who under the Law of Reincarnation, must descend into matter periodically to create a personality. To create the personality means first a descent into the lower mental plane, then the astral, and then the physical. Each such descent is a limitation of the full nature and faculties of the permanent Ego.

I suggest what happens by a crude illustration, showing four reproductions of my hand. In the Plate is Illustration No. I, which is my bare right hand; No. II is the hand wearing a thin cotton glove; No. III, the hand with a woollen glove over the other glove; and No. IV, with the hand covered by a mitten, worn over both the cotton and the woollen gloves. This mitten is lined with the natural wool of the sheep and would be worn when the weather is "below zero", that is, more than thirty-two degrees below freezing point. (To one whose circulation is not strong and whose fingers are apt to get very cold in spite of a heavy woollen glove, a mitten of





I



II



III



IV

this type is the only safeguard against frostbite.)

If I were a pianist, I could play easily with my bare hand. I could play with some difficulty with a hand wearing a thin cotton glove, but certainly I would not be able to bring out the delicacy of phrasing which I could produce if the hand were without the glove. But when the hand is covered by a woollen glove as well, the difficulties would be even greater, and if the hand is also covered by the mitten it would be utterly impossible to play distinct note or produce anything resembling music. This crude but graphic illustration conveys my meaning, which is, that as the Ego descends to each succeeding plane his faculties are steadily more limited.

In the reverse phase, when after death the Ego drops the physical body, it is like having the hand freed (to follow my simile) from the heavy mitten. Similarly, when the astral body, or the woollen glove, is discarded, the hand is freer still, and finally when the mental body, the cotton glove, is discarded, the hand is perfectly free once more. It is obvious that the bare hand has possibilities of

revelations in music or of painting or any of the arts which are not possible to a hand that is "veiled".

To continue my simile, when a friend in Devachan constructs a thought-form of a friend in the shape of the personality of that Ego, the Ego of the friend descends to live in the thought-form and manifests himself through it. The friend reveals many more of his attributes and responds to the love given to him in a way greater than was ever possible for him through his physical or astral plane vehicles.

There is a further mystery, due to the utterly incomprehensible nature of the Ego. It is that even though a thousand friends of an Ego have created a thousand thought-forms of his personality, he descends into every one of those thousands and lives there, giving to each "Devachanee" all the happiness that the Devachanee has planned for. The question arises, How can one individual, the permanent Ego, reside in a thousand thought-forms at one and the same time? This is due to the mysterious nature of the Ego. To explain this nature, let me take

again a simile, the cube. The surface of any one of the six sides of the cube is an equal-sided square. Now, we can imagine, if we have a microtome, that it is possible to slice off a thousand squares from the cube. Each square would contain one-thousandth part of the substance of the cube, and there would be no distinction in nature or in grade between them, as all are parts of the cube.

In a similar fashion, such is the mysterious nature of the Ego who partakes of the Divine Nature, of which he is an inseparable part, that just as the Divine Nature can manifest itself in a million myriad forms—in a blade of grass, in a flower, in a tree, in a mountain range, in the sinner and the saint—similarly the Ego can “pour himself down” into as many thought-forms as are created of him by his friends in their Devachan.

If the thesis which I have so far tried to elucidate is correct—that the Soul of man who functions in a physical body, functions through three veils, first, the veil of the mind body; added over it, the veil of the astral body; and then over both, the veil of the physical body—it logically follows that the

whole subject of death, as usually conceived, must undergo a fundamental change. For, death is nothing more than the casting aside of the lowest veil, the physical body. The individual then remains with the veils of the astral body and the mind body. According to the Theosophical hypothesis, the astral veil is also eliminated, whether in a brief time or in a period of twenty years or more. The Soul then remains to function in the mind body and, with the veil of the mind body over his consciousness, he lives in the Heaven World in his Devachan, for a period which may be a few centuries or fifteen or twenty centuries, according to the quality and the quantity of aspirations which he had developed while functioning through the veil of the physical body, and also through the veil of the astral body after death.

Among the religions of the world there are some which have what I would call a sensible attitude toward death. The most sensible is that of Zoroastrianism. This religion emphasizes all the time the great doctrine of Purity, and that practical conduct must be guided solely by the three virtues of Pure

Thoughts, Pure Words, and Pure Deeds. The conception of the individual as a Soul living in a body is so profound that when the final signs of death begin to appear, it is recognized that these signs of death are the indications of the beginning of impurity. Therefore, all who have been attending on the dying individual leave him, handing over to the care of a special caste of Zoroastrians the tending of the body at the final stage of death. It is utterly inconceivable that there should be any kissing of the face or touching of the hand of the body which is dying and in which impurity has already appeared. While of course there would be grief, as is natural, there is no idea that the individual has in any way become less because he has passed through the gates of death.

Indeed, there is the tradition that the Soul of the individual remains for three days near his body, and after that period begins a journey across a bridge, the Chinvadpool. At the middle point of the bridge he meets one of two characters. He may meet a wonderful maiden who is so lovely that he

asks her, "Who art thou?" She replies, "I was thy Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds." Then he passes with her across the bridge, to live in a state of beatitude. But it may be that the individual whom he meets on the bridge is a hideous old hag, and when he asks the same question of her, the reply is, "I was thy evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds". Then he is cast from the bridge into the hell below, and ceases as a Soul. Needless to say, Zoroastrians never imagine that any one of the faithful, however lax in ritual observance, is so wicked as not to pass over the bridge.

In China, even today, there is a clear recognition that every one who has died, particularly the head of the household, is still with the family, watching over its interests. In the chief room of a Chinese house there is an altar where there are the "Tablets" of the ancestors, the names of the ancestors, and prominently that of the last. In these days there are photographs as well. Every day incense sticks are burned on the altar. More than this, so strong is the idea of the ancestors being still in touch

with the family that, on occasions of great distress, when no human solution appears, it is customary, using a certain ritual, to invoke the aid of the ancestors to throw some light on the situation. This is not through any form of modern Spiritualism. Further, years before he dies it is customary for an individual to order his coffin, and have it placed upright in his room. It is also customary towards the last years, for the daughters and grand-daughters of the household to stitch the silk robe in which the dead body shall be wrapped after death. Everything is taken as a "matter of fact", and while of course death is considered an event of loss, yet there is nothing of the grief and desolation which characterize some of the faiths, particularly Christianity.

It is perhaps in the ancient religion of Egypt that we find the most extraordinary ideas—extraordinary to Christians—concerning death. Every Egyptian was so convinced of his life beyond the grave that long years before he could expect death, he had his tomb prepared, and if he had the means, a record of the principal events of his life

was carved on the walls of the tomb. The more educated Egyptians would have been initiated into certain ceremonies where they would have been given ideas about the conditions beyond the grave. It would appear that some mystical teachings, akin to those of a particular degree in Freemasonry, were transcribed in what is known as *The Book of the Dead*. With every Egyptian mummy of man or of woman there are found certain chapters of *The Book of the Dead*. A very long papyrus of this *Book of the Dead*, with many sections and many scenes, exists with the mummy of Ani in the British Museum. In this papyrus we have represented the scenes to be enacted after death, where the individual is led by the god Anubis before the judgment-seat of the God Osiris, before whom is placed a balance, and nearby stands the god Thoth, with a tablet upon which he is to write the judgment of Osiris. On one of the scales of the balance is put a small jar symbolizing the heart of the individual; on the other, a feather symbolizing the feather of Truth. If the top bar of the balance remains horizontal, the individual is adjudged fit to live among

the blessed dead. He then adds to his name that of the God Osiris, so that the individual Ani is called after judgment Osiris-Ani. Before the judgment, he has narrated what is known as the "negative confession", wherein he repeats, "I have not . . . I have not . . ." naming the things which he has not done, such as defrauding the widow and her children, removing landmarks, and a long list of other acts considered unrighteous by the Egyptians. But if at the time of judgment the feather of Truth goes up and the heart of the individual goes down in the balance, he is condemned and he is cast into the mouth of a monster, depicted in the scene, so that he perishes completely and is annihilated.

In Hinduism the supreme conception concerning the Soul is that it is the absolute Infinite Brahman, or in some way related to Brahman. Since Hinduism states the process of Reincarnation as the mechanism of the Soul's liberation to absolute happiness, naturally there is not the conception that the death of the physical body in any way affects the consciousness of the individual, as a Soul. The body is cremated, with

certain religious rites, and the ashes thrown into the sea or into a sacred river. Then, since the individual is still living but may be handicapped in certain ways, ceremonies called *shrāddha* are performed to give the individual a peaceful passage to the higher life. While there is naturally grief over the death of a member of the family, there is not the sense of desperation which we shall note in connection with the ideas of death in Christianity.

Like in Hinduism are the ideas of death in Buddhism, which too teaches Reincarnation. That religion mentions certain invisible regions, called Devalokas, or worlds of the Gods. There are narrated any number of instances of one who has died as living in these Devalokas. Every Bodhisattva before incarnating to be a Buddha lives waiting in the Tāvātimsa Devaloka, the heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods. One famous incident is in connection with the boy, Chatta Mānavaka, who at the age of twelve or thirteen received from the Lord Buddha certain verses commemorating the Three Gems and the Five Precepts. It was a part of the boy's

karma that as he was returning after the holidays with a bag of gold to give to his teacher, who lived some distance away, he should be set upon by robbers and killed. The story then narrates that when the parents and relations were notified of the boy's death, they all gathered at the place of the tragedy and expressed their grief at the catastrophe. Then the Lord Buddha appeared on the scene and called Chatta back from the Heaven World. As he was being killed, he had been so full of joy concerning the Three Gems and the Five Precepts given to him, that he was unconscious of death, and was immediately born into the Devaloka, the Heaven World. At the call of the Lord Buddha Chatta appeared, with a wonderful aura, and was visible to all. He was questioned by the Lord concerning what had happened, and the boy then narrated in verses the incident of his death and then his life in the Heaven World. All this gave an opportunity to the Lord to preach a sermon to the parents and relations, after which Chatta was given permission to return to his heavenly abode. We see, therefore, that

both in Hinduism and Buddhism there is an attitude towards death which is in sharp contrast to that found in Christianity.

For, in Christianity the ideas concerning what comes beyond the grave are not only vague, but intensely materialistic. After death something mysterious is supposed to happen to the consciousness of the individual, so that every faculty of his disappears for the time, goes into obscurity, to reappear at the Day of Resurrection. In the meantime, the individual is regarded as the *body* in the grave, unconscious. We have in a famous hymn, often sung as a funeral hymn, the two lines:

“Father, in Thy gracious keeping,
Leave we now thy servant sleeping.”

It is this idea of “sleeping”, and under the earth, that is so prominent throughout Christianity, and again and again where poets dwell on the theme, it is always with the idea of “sleeping”. Thus, from the poetess, Edna St. Vincent Millay, we have:

“For rain it hath a friendly sound
To one who’s six feet underground;

“ They do not hear when the great bell
 Is ringing overhead;
 They cannot rise and come to Church
 With us, for they are dead.

“ So when the friends we love the best
 Lie in their churchyard bed,
 We must not cry too bitterly
 Over the happy dead.”

What a ghastly idea to present to the minds of the children, this of the grave and the graveyard, with their comrades who “ cannot hear our footsteps come, they do not see us pass; they cannot feel the warm bright sun that shines upon the grass ”.

One Saturday evening after Good Friday, as I was listening to a London BBC programme during the War, I heard a poem read concerning the Crucifixion, with the startling line, “ Now sleeps the Lord in His stony bed ”. This seemed to me, and still seems, to be an utterly inconceivable conception. Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and according to the Athanasian Creed, co-equal with the Father. Yet He took the form of Jesus and in due time began His ministry. He was aware of His link with God, for He says, “ I

and my Father are one", and also, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work".

To imagine that after the Crucifixion all the great faculties had gone into some kind of an obscuriation for some thirty-six hours and that He was lying unconscious "in His stony bed" is, to me, to speak frankly, a blasphemy.

It is here interesting to note that Muhammanism has always given great reverence to Jesus Christ, who is called "Issa, the son of Miriam" (Mary), but never the Son of God. He was fully recognized as a Prophet of God, in the same line of prophets as Abraham, Moses and David, and after Him the Prophet of God was Muhammad. It is utterly inconceivable to the Muslim mind that the Universal Godhead, Allah, who created the entire universe, could ever have a son. Furthermore, there is the constant legend in Islam that it was not the Prophet Issa who was crucified. It is inconceivable for the Muslim to imagine that a Prophet of God should ever undergo the indignities ending in the Crucifixion, as narrated in the Biblical story. Muslim legend says that it was only

a *simulacrum*, an appearance, that was crucified, but never the Prophet of God, Issa, son of Miriam. Every pious Muhammadan whenever he mentions the Prophet Issa adds, according to tradition, "on whom be peace".

All these ideas come into Christianity from Judaism, for the Hebrews had no clear idea of any survival after death. During the three years' mission of Jesus Christ, He did not dwell upon this topic, for what was more urgent in His mission was to denounce the rigid formality of Judaism, where the sanctimonious leaders "buy tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith".

So, when in Christian lands a person dies, there is the ghastly conception that the beloved cannot know of our continuing love for him. We may go on grieving for his departure, but if we send him love, there is the idea that he cannot know of our love, since he is "asleep". To have a firm belief that our beloved has gone into some kind of temporary extinction, and that all that remains of him is in the grave, is a cause of untold

grief, and it is all so unnecessary. And further, if only Christians could realize the grief of the "departed" when he meets the iron curtain of conviction that he is "asleep", so that as he tries to pour out his consolation and reaffirm his undying love, he is baffled and can but suffer in pain.

Today there is so much proof available to anyone who investigates modern Spiritualism, that one can be convinced that death does not end the consciousness of a person. It is quite true that there are certain disadvantages in Spiritualism, for there is no utter certainty that the communicating entity is indeed the person he claims to be, though he gives many proofs of events before he died. Nevertheless, the idea that at death the individual "sleeps" can very quickly be discarded, and a more wholesome idea take its place.

While what I have stated concerning the pronounced materialism of Christianity, identifying the physical body so closely with the Soul and holding that at the death of the body the Soul lies in the grave in some form of temporary extinction, is true, there is, however,

another phase of Christianity which expresses itself in many hymns. In such hymns the devotional nature of offering to God or Jesus Christ is so great that many a Christian lives in the thought of an eternal communion in Heaven with Him. The theme, in various forms, is "Forever with the Lord". Many a saintly man or woman, when dying, is so utterly conscious of this being "Forever with the Lord" that there is very little thought of lying in a grave under the earth. The intense rapture of devotion lifts the consciousness away from the veil of the physical body and even that of the astral body, to live in a higher state of consciousness.

It is still the tradition in England in the remote parts of the Midland counties, to say of one who has died that "he has gone home". I saw those very words "who has gone home" on a tombstone in the north of London, waiting to be placed at the grave. A noble conception regarding death is the following that I copied from a tombstone in a suburb of London: "whom God took home with a mind as pure as the tablet under which her mortal remains are deposited."

The most striking instance of this higher state of consciousness is an incident narrated in the small book by Richard Hilary, with the title *The Last Enemy*. This phrase comes from the bible: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Hilary had to his credit a great record as an airman, having brought down many enemy 'planes. One night he was himself hit and his 'plane came down in flames in the English Channel. He was rescued, with his face badly burned, and he spent a year in hospital, where the surgeons made almost a new face for him. Except for his eyes, there was a very great change in his appearance. After he was discharged from hospital he returned to the air service. He went on with his flights, but finally crashed again and was killed.

In the book *The Last Enemy* Hilary mentions the incident of an airman comrade of his who had crashed and was killed. This other pilot was engaged to be married when he lost his life. His fiancée was working in war service. Naturally the death of her beloved was a profound shock to her, but what was remarkable was her attitude to her beloved after his death.

Her realization that he was still living and close to her was so intense and it was such a living faith that Hilary, who knew her well, rather mocked her about her delusion. But this is her response:

“I *know* that everything is not over for Peter and me. I know it with all the faith that you are so contemptuous of. We *shall* be together again. We are together now. I feel him constantly close to me; and that is my answer to your cheap talk about the senses. Peter lives within me. He neither comes nor goes, he is ever-present. Even while he was alive there was never quite the tenderness and closeness between us that now is there.

“I believe that in this life we live as in a room with the blinds down and the lights on. Once or twice, perhaps, it is granted us to switch off the lights and raise the blinds. Then for a moment the darkness outside becomes brightness, and we have a glimpse of what lies beyond this life. I believe not only in life after death, but in life before death. This life is to me an intermission lived in spiritual darkness. In this life we are in a state not of being, but of becoming.

“Peter and I are eternally bound up together; our destinies are the same.”¹

¹ This quotation is given with the permission of the publishers, Messrs. Macmillan & Company.

These words by this intensely spiritual lady show that even while covered with the veil of the physical plane she was able to penetrate through that veil and feel the intense living presence in the astral world of her beloved. This is the only instance that I know of this wonderful penetration of the veils.

Usually how the attitude towards death is very much reflected in the habit in English homes of "drawing down the blinds" of all the windows. There is a beautiful poem by Wilfrid Owen, a young poet who was killed in the First World War, when he was twenty-five years old. In his "Anthem for Doomed Youth" the first two lines are:

"What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns."

He concludes the sonnet with three lines describing what happens when the news comes of the death of a soldier:

"The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds."

It is scarcely possible for us today to realize the ghastliness of the atmosphere that

surrounded an English home visited by death some sixty or seventy years ago. The body was kept in the house for about a week, while all the funeral arrangements were being made. Everything in the house was stilled and all who moved did so with little noise, and all voices were lowered, and a general atmosphere of gloom pervaded the house the whole time. This terrible atmosphere, as one can imagine, made a profoundly depressing influence on the children. At the end of the period, there was a gathering of the mourners in a room. All were dressed in black, black gloves were distributed by the funeral undertaker, the body was borne downstairs to be placed in the hearse. The hearse itself was black, and in those days had at the four corners and in the middle an erection of large ostrich feathers, dyed black. Then there was the slow procession of carriages after the hearse.

Altogether, while the atmosphere was solemn, it was inevitably one of gloom, for the thought all the time was "Father, in Thy gracious keeping, leave we now Thy servant sleeping". The ritual was profoundly solemn,

with the priest meeting the body at the lych-gate, and moving towards the grave, repeating the solemn words, " I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die". There was then the solemn casting of earth on the coffin six feet below the surface, with the words, " Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust". After this part of the ceremony the relations and friends returned home, where they partook of a light meal.

Something of this gloom has been lessened, as in these days with many Christians (except Roman Catholics) within three days the body is taken in its coffin to the crematorium, where there is a brief and solemn service. With the words " Earth to earth", the coffin slips out of sight into another chamber where it is taken immediately to be consumed in the flames or by electricity.

The problem of the Immortality of the Soul is not solved by the proofs which Spiritualism can give as to the existence of the individual after death. Even though unchallengeable

proof can be given that the entity who communicates through a medium is indeed the one who has "died", no real proof is given that the life beyond the grave is eternal, that is, endless in Time. Who knows if after a century or a few centuries the Soul may not cease to be? Therefore, the problem of Immortality is something quite different.

This difference is illustrated in the case of Socrates. We have a full description of his last month in prison, and actually a description of the final scene. Socrates knew, when he went to face the charge against him of blasphemy against the Gods and of misleading youth, that he would be condemned to death by the hostile jury. Now, it was a strange element in the life of Socrates that there entered into his life an indescribable factor which he termed an "inner voice" and which later writers have called his "daemon". This inner voice never instructed Socrates what he was *to do*; but whenever he was about to do something that he *should not do*, this inner voice held him back from the action.

Socrates narrates several instances of his "inner voice" interceding. In his address

to the jury after his condemnation to death, he narrated that his coming to be condemned was right, as his death was something good, and not an evil. He mentioned how when he started out to the Law Court, his "daemon"—which prevented him from doing anything that should not be done—did not on this occasion speak. Therefore, when he started towards his condemnation, he knew that he was doing something that was essentially good. After his condemnation, he could not immediately, for certain reasons, be given the deadly drink of hemlock; a month had to elapse before that fatal day.

Early on that morning his friends gathered, as usual, at the prison gate and entered his chamber. For more than a month they had done that, during which period Socrates continued as usual discoursing on many topics dealing with the nature of the Archetypes and of the Soul's relation to them. When the day came, he was still talking to a group of friends as the jailer entered with the cup of hemlock. The jailer remarked that all others who had been condemned to drink the hemlock were furious with him and used to

curse him, during the period of incarceration and on the fatal morning especially, but how different it all was with Socrates, who all the time had no grievance against him, and indeed was friendly. Socrates took the cup as if it might be a cup of wine. He asked the jailer what would be the symptoms after he drank, and was informed that he was to keep walking in his chamber, until his legs felt heavy, then he was to lie down. This happened, and Socrates lay down and composed himself for the end. The jailer by feeling them, found his limbs had become insensitive from the feet up, and informed Socrates that when the insensitiveness reached the region of his bowels, the end would be swift. Socrates had wrapped up his face, but suddenly he threw off the covering and turned to a friend and said, "Crito, I owe a cock to Aesculapius. Will you remember to pay the debt?" Crito promised. Socrates then covered up his face again, and soon afterwards the jailer threw off the covering and announced that Socrates was dead. Naturally, his friends were full of intense grief.

Before death, these friends had suggested to Socrates various schemes whereby he might escape death, such as voluntarily going into exile, or accepting a nominal fine. Socrates consented to nothing that would mean escaping death. For he knew death was the beginning of Immortality.

The attitude of Socrates towards death is due to the fact that he was conscious of Immortality many years before the end, through his philosophic speculations, which were mainly intellectual and with no spiritual experiences except occasionally that of his "daemon". Socrates had so steeped himself in the realization of the Ultimate Reality, the Good, the True and the Beautiful, as the very essence of all life visible and invisible, that he lived, as it were, the life of Immortality all the time. When therefore death came, though he had no detailed information as to what would follow other than the general idea of the Greeks that he would be living with the "happy dead" in the Elysian Fields, he knew, felt and lived the fact that he would be going to "the Gods", and would partake of Immortality, or deathlessness in Time.

A famous incident in the life of Socrates is the teaching given to him when a young man by Diotima, the prophetess of Delphi, concerning the Stairway of Love. She explains to him that for the discovery of the finality of Being, which is Absolute Beauty, Truth and Goodness, it is essential that one should love. She instructs Socrates that the individual must first love one person and one only, and with a sense of perfect offering. One characteristic of this loving must be that the lover creates beautiful objects of thought, word and deed, as the result of the capacity to love, which he has developed. Then Diotima continues that, though love begins with the love of the outward beauty of the beloved, the time may come when the lover will love a beloved whose outward form may have no quality of beauty at all. But he will still continue in his great love and create beautiful gifts to give to the world.

Then, rising as in a stairway, Diotima explains that the next discovery is that, if the lover sees what is lovable in his beloved, he will note that same quality of lovability in others as well, and so will thus begin to love

them also. Next, says Diotima, rising on the Stairway of Love, the lover will begin to love the beauty of Sciences and Laws, and finally at the end of the Stairway he will come face to face with Absolute Beauty, which has been the guiding principle in all his long experience of love.

This Absolute Beauty cannot be described in any terms of human experience, nor by any simile to any being or thing found on earth. But the lover knows that it is this principle of Absolute Beauty that has all the time been guiding him up the Stairway of Love, to come at last to the consummation of the discovery of Absolute Beauty. It goes without saying that to see Absolute Beauty "face to face", as it were, is to be one with Immortality, and therefore all sense of death disappears from the life of the lover.

The word "love" has very many significations. When Christ said that the First Commandment is to love God, He added, "The second is like unto this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". It is obvious that we cannot "love" our neighbour with that same intensity of devotion and self-sacrifice with

which a mother, for instance, loves her child, or a lover loves his beloved. The word "love" in the saying of Jesus Christ has far more the sense of perfect Charity, which will never commit any injustice towards a neighbour, and will share with him whatever of good that he has found.

There is a type of love which is indeed very rare, but nevertheless has happened in a few men or women. This is where the beloved is seen as a vision of the Divine, as a pathway to God. We have thus the exquisite story of the love of Dante for Beatrice. At the end of his *Vita Nuova* (The New Life), in one of the many sonnets he speaks of Mona Bice, who is the lady Beatrice. As Dante concludes *Vita Nuova*, he writes: "If my life continues, some years more, I hope to say of her what has never been said of any other woman." The last part of his *Divine Comedy*, *Paradiso*, is inseparable from the life in heaven of Beatrice.

In Dante's great creation, *The Divine Comedy*, two individuals guide him on his journey. Through *Purgatorio*, Purgatory, the poet Virgil comes to meet Dante, sent, he says, by a message from a lady in heaven, to guide him in

his journey through the underworld. Virgil is a symbol of perfect human wisdom. But there comes a time in Dante's journey, as he passes from *Purgatorio* into *Paradiso*, Paradise, that a second person comes to guide him. This is Beatrice his beloved, who is a symbol of the Divine Wisdom. It is she who guides him from one sphere of heaven to another. Once he is so utterly absorbed in the wondrous beauty of Beatrice that he is in a rapture. It is then that, "overwhelming me with a smile", she addresses him in these exquisite words: "Turn and listen, for not in mine eyes alone is Paradise." Indeed, it is only as he is intent on the vision of Beatrice that he discovers that he has passed from one sphere of heaven to the next higher.

It is this same intensity of a human lover towards his beloved that we have in the Persian legend, where the woman Zuleykā says of her beloved Yusūf:

"I shall roll up the carpet of life when I see
 Thy dear face again, and shall cease to be;
 For self will be lost in that rapture, and all
 The threads of my thought from my hand will
 have fled;

Thou will be my soul in mine own soul's stead.
 All thought of Self will be swept from my mind,
 And Thee, only, Thee, in my place shall it find;
 More precious than heaven, than earth more dear,
 Myself were forgotten if Thou wert near."

Similarly phrased is the love that the nun Heloise bore to her husband Abelard the monk:

"Not with me was my heart but with thee. But now, more than ever, if it not be with thee, it is nowhere. For without thee it cannot anywhere exist. . . . I have forbidden myself all pleasures that I might obey thy will. I have reserved nothing for myself, save this, to be now entirely thine."

In the incident narrated of the English lady in the book of Richard Hilary, she had transcended the boundaries of death, for her beloved was with her all the time. She was living for the time with a sense of deathlessness. But since our human nature is constructed as it is, and memories do slowly fade, it may well be that in her case the intensity of her realization of unity with her beloved might slowly become less. But that does not mean that it completely disappears out of her life. It undergoes a transformation, such as

is described by Ruskin. From the time he was a child, Ruskin always noted the beauty, colour and shape of clouds. This sense of their beauty increased as he grew to manhood and he wrote often about clouds in his works. Ruskin mentions, when writing as an old man, that his emotional response to the beauty of clouds had necessarily lessened with age. On the other hand he says that, in the place of the emotional response, he had a keener *spiritual* sense of the beauty of clouds. In other words, while in the earlier part of his life he saw clouds past the veil of the physical world and through the veil of the astral, there came a time when he transcended even the veil of astral consciousness, and "saw" the clouds through the finer veil of the mind body.

In the matter of two Souls absolutely devoted to each other with love in a spirit of sacrifice, we have a very striking statement made in 1875 by an Adept of the Egyptian division of the Great Brotherhood who signed under the name "Serapis":

"Know, O Brother mine, that where a truly spiritual love seeks to consolidate itself doubly by a pure, permanent union of the two, in its earthly sense, it

commits no sin, no crime in the eyes of the great Ain-Soph, for it is but the divine repetition of the Male and Female Principles—the microcosmal reflection of the first condition of Creation. On such a union angels may well smile! But they are rare, Brother mine, and can only be created under the wise and loving supervision of the Lodge, in order that the sons and daughters of clay might not be utterly degenerated, and the Divine Love of the Inhabitants of Higher Spheres (Angels) towards the daughters of Adam be repeated. But even such must suffer, before they are rewarded. Man's Atma may remain pure and as highly spiritual while it is united with its material body; why should not two souls in two bodies remain as pure and uncontaminated notwithstanding the earthly passing union of the latter two. . .”¹

SERAPIS

It will be noted that the Adept is not speaking of two ordinary lovers, however devoted they may be to each other, but of two who are characterized by “a truly spiritual love”. That is to say, who are both committed to the great work of the redemption of mankind, directed by the Great Hierarchy. In other words, the two are disciples of the Masters of the Wisdom, though not necessarily both of

¹ Letter 19, *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, Second Series.

one Master, for they are likely to be on two different Rays.

When we have two such Souls, then a special act of the Great Hierarchy can take place which makes of these two Souls "one, not two". But this special action is solely for the purpose that the two may become a large channel for the forces from on high. If each of them were to be denoted by the figure 1, then in the ordinary case the two devoted to each other might be given as $1+1=2$. But when the special action of the Adepts takes place, then it is no longer $1+1=2$, but the 2 is squared, that is, $2^2=4$. In other words, the channel for the outpouring of the forces from on high is not two channels each of the value of 1, but one large, united channel with the value of 4.

Furthermore, when these two Souls, dedicated to the Great Work, discover through increasing love for each other more and more of the Hidden Light, their quality as a united channel for that Work and for that Light increases each life in geometrical proportion. While they began with 4, next life they become as $2 \times 4=8$, the life after, $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2=16$,

and so on, in ever-increasing splendour and usefulness.

But the Adept mentions that while this union "can only be created under the wise and loving supervision of the Lodge", "even such must suffer before they are rewarded". Why should suffering be an inevitable element of this process of high spiritual union? I can only suggest the answer by a simile. In these days of aeroplane flights over long distances, the pilot will be in uniform all the time, even during the few days when he is waiting at his destination before the return trip. He will have with him the minimum of baggage, possibly only under-clothing. This discarding of the ordinary number of bags, trunks, etc., is necessary because of the conditions of the flight. In the same way, two Souls who have committed themselves to the Great Work must free themselves of many types of handicapping Karma which would hinder their efficiency in the Great Work. This "payment of debt to Karma" necessarily involves much acute suffering, probably extending over many years. But when this tragedy of "crucifixion" is over for each in

that life, then the action of the Great Lodge can take place. From that moment the two Souls are "not two, but one".

It is an interesting fact that from the moment two Souls have been made "one, not two" by the action of the Adepts, their Karmas interblend. It is as if the two Karmas were two tanks joined by a pipe. If the level in one rises, the level in the other rises also, till both are at the same level. If the level in one tank diminishes, a similar equalization takes place. The sufferings of one are shared by the other at the same time; so too the joy of one adds to the rejoicing by the other. And so throughout the ages, the two travel side by side, step by step.

The Stairway of high and perfect Love is not the only Stairway up which Souls can climb to the Kingdom of Immortality. There are other means of response. One such is the response to the message which Nature has to give. Among all the poets of England, Wordsworth senses most acutely this message. It was necessary that he should be alone for the great experience, which he has described in the following words:

"that blessed mood,
 In which the burthen of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened; that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
 And even the motion of our human blood,
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul;
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things."

He gives a very clear description of that experience—"we are laid asleep in body, and become a living soul". Because he became "a living soul", for the moment he knew what is Immortality, though he hardly realized it in the sense in which I now use "Immortality".

There are other ways, too, of realization. Each Soul has its own road to the Highest. Some respond to the message of Nature when that message comes from a great mountain range; for others, when the message comes from the sea; for others still from the hills and dales or lakes; others find it from a flower,

exquisite as the lotus or a rose; but equally, if there is the right mood of response, the message of Immortality is found in the tiniest wild flower of the fields.

Similarly is it for some with music. There come certain high moments of response when indeed the listener is "laid asleep in body and becomes a living soul". It is impossible to experience this in the modern concert halls, where immediately after the music there is uproarious applause which completely breaks up the mood. But I have listened in London to great music in my own room, given by the orchestra of the London B.B.C. Of course immediately the music is over, I have had to get up and shut off the radio, in order not to be interrupted in my mood by the horrible clapping. But I have felt, towards the close of some violin sonata, as the violinist ends on a certain note which dies away, that I have contacted Immortality.

Something of the same sense of Immortality is possible for all as they listen to the overture to *Lohengrin* by Wagner. This describes the Holy Grail as it rests in Heaven surrounded by worshipping angels, who slowly bring it

down to earth, and then take it back. In this overture describing the Grail in Heaven, the violins are playing softly on a very high note and continue for several dozen bars. Slowly the violins are joined by other instruments, all very delicately, and revealing in music the slow descent of the Holy Grail. Then comes the moment when the Grail has reached the earth, borne by the angels, and the whole orchestra joins in triumphantly in a magnificent volume of sound which continues for some time. This great volume of music slowly diminishes, as the angels return with the Holy Grail to Heaven, and finally the music is, as in the beginning, from the violins on a high note which slowly fades away.

It is strange that sometimes in music the final realization of the great message conveyed by music may be experienced from only one single tap on a kettle-drum. There is one instance in Wagner's *Nibelungen Ring* where, as the music slowly ends, it is that one final soft tap on the drum which is like the key that opens the door of the mystery.

It is a fact of our experience that the moments of realization are intermittent. It

is as when we climb to the top of a mountain and from there look outwards and see a great vision. But then afterwards we descend to the valleys. Carlyle once described the effect of music. "Music is a kind of inarticulate unfathomable speech, which leads us to the edge of the infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that." Similarly, each according to his own temperament, has these flashes of glimpses of what lies beyond transient life in Immortality.

The problem is, is it possible to have the realization of Immortality, of life in Timelessness, all the time, without a break? This needs a new and high type of Yoga. I can only describe it by a simile. First, we are mistaken in thinking that the past is past. There is a wonderful truth in the phrase "The Eternal Now". The past can be made to live as the present, if only we know the technique. The first element is to remember what we experienced when we were on the mountain-top, and then *re-live* the intensity of our experience, even if something of that intensity has faded out of the consciousness. Then, all the moments of intensity—not

alone on the Stairway of Love but along the other Stairways as well—must be *re-lived* by us. We have, as it were, to make each experience of the past like a series of pearls threaded on a silver strand (or one hundred and eight *tulsi* beads, as in India), and make of the chaplet a rosary.

The devotional person holds a rosary in his hands, and touching each pearl or bead, repeats a short prayer. This is done hour after hour, except for the times of the longer and more formal prayers. Similarly, we must make of the moments of exaltation of the past a rosary, so that as we live those moments once again, the whole past becomes for us a living Now. Each moment of the past, when we were on the mountain-top, and looked beyond and saw a vision, meant in reality living for the time in communion with Immortality. When, therefore, we train ourselves with our rosary, then Time ceases with its element of death, because we are living always in Timelessness, one with Immortality.

If, as is my thesis and that of Socrates, one can be conscious of Immortality all the

days of one's life, and since all life is a prison, it may be asked, "Why not step out of the prison by suicide?"

The Romans considered that they were the masters of their own lives, and when they saw nothing more in life for them, they committed suicide, considering they had a complete right in the matter. It was usually done by entering a hot bath and opening their veins, or as done by the famous younger Cato of Utica. Cato was defeated by Caesar but not killed in battle; he would not allow himself to be made a prisoner by Caesar, whom he considered would decree himself king and abolish the liberties of Rome. Cato then read Socrates' Dialogue *Phaedo* on Immortality, and he induced a slave to hold a sword, fixed at an angle upon the ground, and then fell upon it.

In Japan when two lovers, possibly one of them married, found the fulfilment of their love denied by Fate, and ran away from place to place, but found the police were at last about to capture them, they would determine to commit suicide by drowning. They, as Buddhists, would believe in a continuing

life after death; thus, in the drama of Chickamatsu, *Love Suicide at Imajima*, the two lovers committed suicide saying, "May we two come to rebirth together within the lotus", which means, May we enjoy perpetual bliss together in Paradise.

No one blamed them, but only had compassion for them. Indeed, one Japanese poet goes so far as to say that the two must not rebel against their fate, and that it is better they should write a poem, not expressing despair but some other thought on life, leave it on the bank, and then jump into the water.

Socrates' answer to the question of suicide is along a different direction. He says that we do not own ourselves, but that we are "the chattels of the God" and therefore we must wait for His decree as to when we shall be released from the prison of this life.

The work of becoming one with Immortality cannot be accomplished within the experiences, however spiritual, of one lifetime. To realize Immortality while in a mortal body means to possess the faculty of seeing through all the seven veils that envelop consciousness. In other terms, it means to

live in the physical body as a personality and yet at the same time as the Monad who is eternally one with the Divine—"the Son in the bosom of the Father". Many lifetimes of experiences are required, and in each life there will be a Calvary and a Crucifixion. For, all dross must be purged away from all the vehicles of the Soul, and all evil Karma, that is, handicapping Karma, must be exhausted, in order to gaze with unclouded vision into the Soul of Things, and to feel in uttermost purity the systole and diastole of the World Soul.

There are seven fundamental temperaments among Souls, and by all of them a path needs to be trodden. I have used the simile of a Stairway. There is a Stairway of Love, another of Wisdom, another still of Devotion. So too, four other Stairways. During each lifetime one or more steps will be trodden. It is part of the destiny of each Soul to mount all the steps of the Stairway. It is here that suffering is inevitable. For, till we reach the last step of the Stairway, our life is as a pattern woven in a texture whose warp and woof are suffering and

rejoicing. There will come the day when "all deaths are dead", and the Soul is one with the Eternal Radiance, and suffering is only as a dream of the night that has ended.

It is my Dharma, my Task as a fragment of the Divine, to tread the Stairway of Love. It must be trodden not for the sake of any love in which I aim to rejoice—though that love is inevitable—but for the sake of the Great Work. The theme of the life to be lived was given by the Lord Buddha when He sent out His first messengers to "beat the drum of the Immortal" (*amatam, amritam*), so that men may hear of the Way: *bahujana hitāya, bahujana sukhāya, lokānukampāya, sukhāya devamanussānām*—"for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of pity for the world, for the happiness of Devas and men." But treading the Stairway of Love brings with it the carrying of the Cross along the road to Calvary, and to endure there a Crucifixion.

Thirty-eight years ago, as I was travelling alone in a railway carriage, a vision came of the Way before my feet. Swiftly I wrote out the vision in the following verses. I

think the ease and the speed of the composition is due to a remembrance deep within me of the experiences I had had during many past lives, as I climbed one step after another of the Stairway of Love.

Love's high achievement
Is but bereavement,
 Forget not, heart;

Each lovely pleasure
Is but the measure
 Of a new smart.

Sweeter the loving,
Swifter the proving
 Joy that is pain;

Though clouds the sun hide,
Rest by the wayside,
 Never again.

Smiles and love-laughter,
Renouncement after,
 If Love must thrive;

Till at the sun's blaze
Undismayed, canst gaze,
 And yet survive.

Up this Love's Stairway,
Without yea or nay,
 Now must thou climb;

Heart seared, yet flowering,

Denied, yet dowering—

O fate sublime.

I did not then know that the vision was prophetic of what awaited me in future years. To each on his Stairway it is the fact that "without yea or nay, now must thou climb". Once entered on the Path, there is no return, nor indeed a halting except for a brief time for recuperation and to gather one's forces to climb the next steps. And furthermore, once the Soul has seen the blinding vision of the light, it is "till at the sun's blaze, undismayed canst gaze, *and yet survive*". The Soul, almost terrified, would prefer to refuse; but he cannot. He must learn the technique of revealing that Light to all men, dimming its blinding glory to suit their eyes. Life, as he pays his debts to Karma, will "deny" him again and again. Despite all anguish and tribulation, he must continue "dowering" others with the gifts of the Spirit. The destiny he has chosen is truly "a fate sublime". He knows only the agony of the Crucifixion; not yet revealed to him are the Resurrection and the Ascension. Yet

the "Father-in-God" by whom he is being trained and in whose work he partakes, sees for him the inevitable Resurrection and the glory of the Ascension; his Leader's "everlasting arms" enfold him, and that "Father-in-God", one with him in fellowship and Brotherhood, watches and sustains him in his direst trials. Though he feels utterly isolated and alone, and the task appears beyond his strength, he must not lose faith, and must say even in the deepest depths of hell, "He knows, He knows".

ENVOI

WHEN this little work *The Seven Veils over Consciousness* is published, I shall have completed my seventy-seventh year. I can now look back and see what has been the record of my work. It falls into two divisions; first, as a Theosophical worker, and second, my own private life as an individual seeking happiness.

My good Karma of past lives gave me the advantage of being born in a Buddhist environment. This was an advantage in two regards. First, I was quickly put in touch with the influences of the Lord Buddha, His Law, and His true Sangha. Naturally, as a boy I knew of the ideas of Reincarnation and Karma, but in addition, I became familiar with the idea of the Great Ones who are called Arhats. The second advantage was that by being born in a Buddhist family, I was completely free of any element of the warp of caste, which would have entered into my character from the time I was a

child, if I had been born in a Hindu family. In these days, many of our active Theosophists in India, though born as Brahmins, have in the main cast aside the shackles of caste, but nevertheless something of the original warping is bound to exist.

A brother of my last life, C. W. Leadbeater, was sent to Ceylon in 1886 in connection with work for Buddhist education. Before he went he was given a hint by his Master that a young brother of his, who had been killed when the two were boys, had been re-born in Ceylon¹. He had, then, the work of finding that brother, and after a few years of observation of various boys he finally discovered his brother in myself. Then he told me of the two chief Masters in connection with the Theosophical Movement, and asked which one of them I wanted to follow. I decided on the Mahātma Koot Hoomi without any hesitation—I presume because of past links with my “Father-in-God”.

¹ The story of my early (and glorious) death in Brazil is narrated in the tale “Saved by a Ghost” in *The Perfume of Egypt* by C. W. Leadbeater. The silver and ebony crucifix worn on a chain, as mentioned in the story, was given by him to his *protégé*, J. W. Matley, who at his death arranged for the crucifix to be sent to me.

From the time of that decision, new Karma immediately began to operate, for it was necessary as a candidate-worker in the Master's service that I should be taken to England and there be trained in many ways. But the difficulty was that when I cautiously suggested to my parents the idea of leaving Ceylon, they showed a violent objection, because to them in 1889 England was a kind of wild and woolly West. They said they would arrange to send me to college in Colombo. What, then, was to be done? There was, of course, only one answer, and that was for me to run away from home. My Brother made careful arrangements and contacted the mate of a schooner in Colombo harbour, to which he and some of us boys used occasionally to swim. It was arranged that the mate was to receive me and keep me concealed till the ship left Colombo for England, by way of the Cape. My Brother was to meet me afterwards somewhere in the English Channel. Everything had to be done in secret, so that I could not be traced.

I purchased a carpet-bag, put in it a few clothes and one volume of Jules Verne, *Twenty*

Thousand Leagues under the Sea. On a certain afternoon I went with my carpet-bag to a suburban station, and there along the line I met a sailor to whom I gave the bag. It was that night that I had to run away. As it happened, my mother was visiting some friends after dark, and I accompanied her. When she reached her friends, I slipped away and, as planned, met my Brother at the sea-side. It was monsoon time and there was a strong wind blowing, with surf at the sea's edge. My Brother told me that there was a boat not far away, and that I would have to swim out to it. I had on only my coat and the dhoti, which I gave him, and then naked as I came from my mother's womb, I plunged into the sea. Fortunately I did not have to swim out very far, soon found the boat, and was taken on board. I still vividly remember, as I lay crouching naked in the boat, the sense of the cold from the monsoon winds. I was rowed to the schooner, where I was received by the ship's mate and taken to the cabin of the Captain, who was ashore for some days till the schooner was to leave. I was locked in his cabin, with a bucket for

physical needs. My carpet-bag was in the cabin, and my meals were brought there. I stayed in the cabin for thirty-six hours.

In the meantime, there was, naturally, a great disturbance in the home, as I had not returned. The family searched for me everywhere, then my father next day got an idea that my Brother, C. W. Leadbeater, must know where I was. He went and threatened him with a revolver, but my Brother of course said not a word as to my whereabouts. At the end of the thirty-six hours, the family had adjusted themselves to the situation, and intimated that if I would return I could then leave with my Brother with their formal blessing. As a matter of fact, the ship, which should have left on a particular day, was delayed some days. So I returned with my Brother to my parents. I have regretted much that I lost the opportunity of being a sailor.

One strange factor in this incident was that throughout it all I had not the slightest sense of trepidation, or any feeling of excitement over an adventure. It was as if a drama had been written out for me, in which I was merely an actor, with no personal feelings in

the matter at all. I simply did what had to be done.

In the course of years I obtained my University degree, and steadily my knowledge of the Wisdom grew. I had a natural aptitude to take wide surveys, and so all departments of knowledge, Religion, Science and the Arts were welded into one Theosophical philosophy. All this was one part of my life—that as a Theosophical worker.

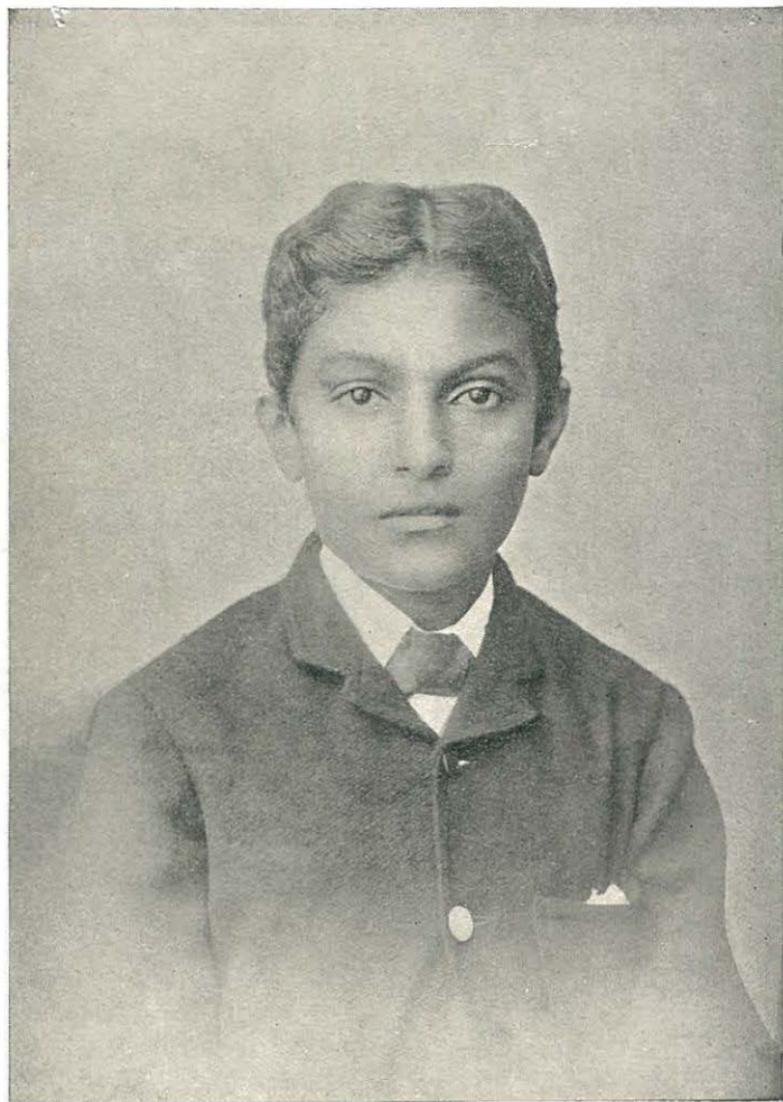
I desire now to reveal for the first time something of my inner life, hoping that others, reading of what has been my destiny, may remain firm in their dedication to the work entrusted to them, in spite of what Karma may bring them.

My first crucifixion was in the night the steamer left Colombo harbour. I had moved through the strange drama, narrated above, of running away from home, unconscious of any novelty in what I was doing. But that first night I realized what I had lost. For, I had loved deeply a cousin of mine, a boy a year younger than myself. I had never revealed my love to him. But that night out at sea I knew I was going away, away from him, and

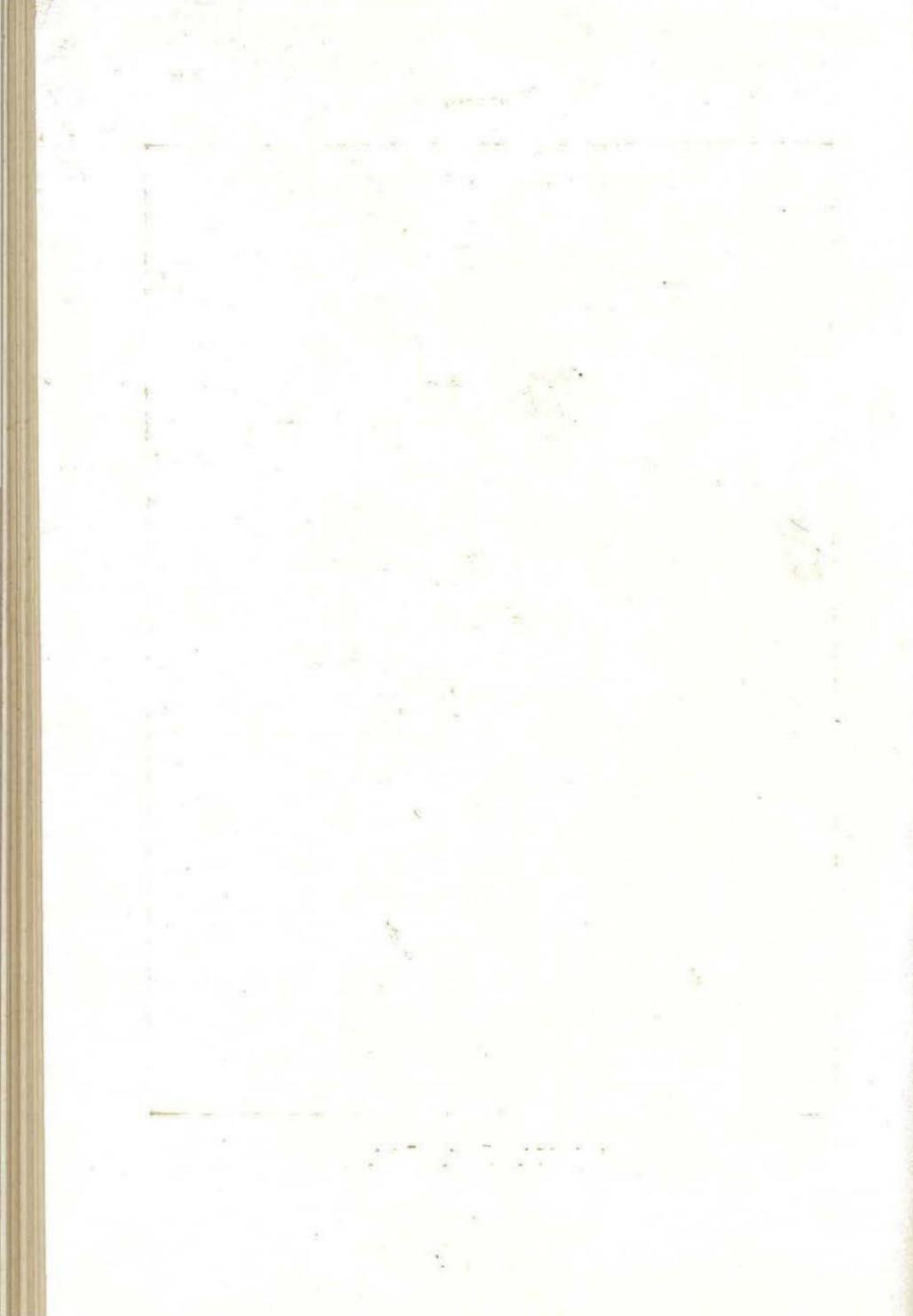
I wept bitterly. My Brother, who was in the cabin, sat by my side, but said no word. What could he say? At last, I cried myself to sleep.

That night, my "Father-in-God" called me to Him, and received me as a disciple on Probation. What *Light on the Path* says was proven true in my case: "Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart." My soul's feet were that night washed in the blood of my heart. I was then thirteen, and it was the first of many crucifixions that my Karma has allotted to me, both to purify me and to make me more efficient as a worker in the Great Work.

The years from boyhood to manhood passed, the inner life of the heart marked by strain each year. Now and then there were brief periods of happiness. But also crucifixions. Then came the day when I had to carry the heaviest cross of all my past lives, and take a longer journey to Golgotha, there to endure the direst crucifixion. It lasted twenty-two years, and there was never an hour, day or night, I was not aware of its acute agony. But nothing of



C. JINARĀJADĀSA



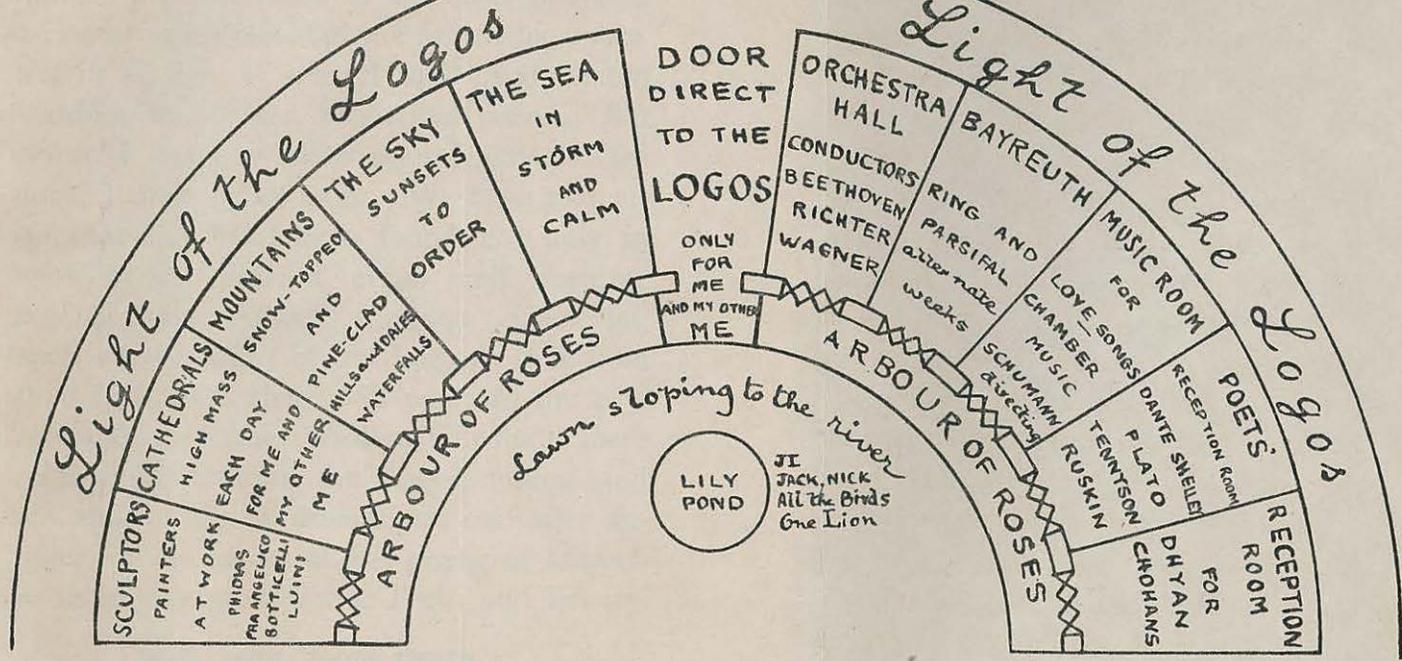
it all was shown in my face, as I attended to my many labours. The only solace was in the faces of children. No one knew, except my Father-in-God. He could but watch, for as He said long ago, "he who runs swiftly must pay for his swiftness". But at last that crucifixion ended, and there was a brief period of peace, and some moments of joy. But debts to Karma had to be paid, and so began yet another crucifixion.

There await me in future lives many a crucifixion, but less agonizing and for briefer periods, as the evil account of Karma lessens. Only when, after transcending the Seven Veils I shall be on the threshold of Divinity, will crucifixion cease. I shall then enter the Light, though I shall never touch the Flame.¹

My Father-in-God, in order to give me vision and strength for greater work, twice revealed to me some glimpses of the future. I shall not explain how the future can be seen. The first vision is of a future far, far away, dealing with the work which I shall have to do when the life-wave on this globe, the Earth, shall be transferred to the next

¹ *Light on the Path*, Rule 12.

Plan of Devachan



Sweete Themmes
runne softlie til
I end my song

C.J. fecit 1911

globe. Slowly I put down something of that vision, using such gift of writing as I had. It appears in a tiny booklet with the title *Flowers and Gardens*. In later booklets, *The Wonder Child* and *Release*, I tried to express other aspects of that future.

The second vision of the future was given me just as the long crucifixion of twenty-two years began. Swiftly I wrote of that future in another booklet, *Offering*. For this vision was revealed to me by my Father-in-God so that, though I would have to endure direst suffering, there yet is still a day-to-be when suffering shall cease, and the work that I shall do in Eternity will have no shadow whatsoever of pain, but be surcharged with joy sublime.

Forty-one years ago in Chicago, in a mood of fantasy, I drew on paper my Plan of Devachan, my Heaven-World-to-be, and wrote three verses underneath. I give that plan for all to examine. "Ji" is my friend, the cat, who had individualized as a baby Soul. "Jack" was a fox-terrier, and "Nick" a nondescript large black dog, kept in order by the pedigreed Jack. Both dogs belonged to my

friends Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Kirby of Italy, at whose home I was often a guest. All will note that no place is found in my Heaven World for lecturing on Theosophy or for writing books. Yet in all lives to come I shall expound the Wisdom, in lectures, books and poems. But before I can *give* more than I have so far done, I must *receive* more. We have to realize that the Wisdom is found not only in books or in Gurus; it reveals itself wherever is life or form. All the "windows" of my Plan open on the Light of the Logos. It is from that Light that there will pour on me new revelations of the Wisdom. I shall there receive, direct from the Logos, visions and realizations of new dimensions, one after another, of the modes of His giving of Himself to us in uttermost Good, Truth and Beauty.

नान्यः पन्थाः विद्यते स्यनाय ।

Nānyaḥ panthāḥ vidyate 'yanāya.

"No other Path at all is there to go."

*

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Dahin! Dahin!

Möcht ' ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn!

Thither, thither, O my Beloved, let us wend!

VERSES WRITTEN IN 1911 TO THE
" PLAN OF DEVACHAN "

Thus will I plan and dream the livelong day
Of my Rose-Garden by the heavenly Thames;
Why should woeful NOW forbid me to play
In the joyful THEN that I see thro' dreams?

There will I wander with My Other I
Hand in hand like two children innocent;
There will we bring to pass each dear intent
Was brought on earth to naught by Destiny.

O Life in love and Love in life, decree
That soon for me may end this weary night;
Grant that I and My Other I may be
With Thee evermore in our Home of Light.

December 1, 1952

