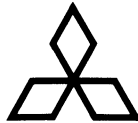
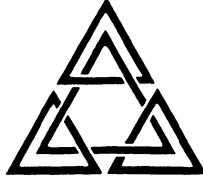


Teach the people to see that life on this earth, even the happiest, is but a burden and an illusion; that it is our own Karma, the cause producing the effect, that is our own judge – our saviour in future lives – and the great struggle for life will soon lose its intensity.

THE MAHA CHOHAN



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As the lord of this mortal frame experienceth therein
infancy, youth, and old age, so in future incarnations will it
meet the same. One who is confirmed in this belief is not
disturbed by anything that may come to pass.

SRI KRISHNA





REINCARNATION

How man has come to be the complex being that he is and why, are questions that neither Science nor Religion makes conclusive answer to. This immortal thinker having such vast powers and possibilities, all his because of his intimate connection with every secret part of Nature from which he has been built up, stands at the top of an immense and silent evolution. He asks why Nature exists, what the drama of life has for its aim, how that aim may be attained. But Science and Religion both fail to give a reasonable reply. Science does not pretend to be able to give the solution, saying that the examination of things as they are is enough of a task; religion offers an explanation both illogical and unmeaning, and acceptable but to the bigot, as it requires us to consider the whole of Nature as a mystery and to seek for the meaning and purpose of life with all its sorrow in the pleasure of a God who cannot be found out. The educated and enquiring mind knows that dogmatic religion can only give an answer invented by man while it pretends to be from God.

What then is the universe for, and for what final purpose is man the immortal thinker here in evolution? It is all for the experience and emancipation of the soul, for the purpose of raising the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-hood. The great aim is to reach self-consciousness; not through a race or a tribe or some favored nation, but by and through the perfecting, after transformation, of the whole mass of matter as well as what we now call soul. Nothing is or is to be left out. The aim for present man is his initiation into complete knowledge, and for the other kingdoms below him that they may be raised up gradually from stage to stage to be in time initiated also. This is evolution carried to its highest power; it is a magnificent prospect; it makes of man a god, and gives to every part of nature the possibility of being one day the same; there is strength and nobility in it, for by this no man is dwarfed and belittled, for no one is so originally sinful that he cannot rise above all sin. Treated

from the materialistic position of Science, evolution takes in but half of life; while the religious conception of it is a mixture of nonsense and fear. Present religions keep the element of fear, and at the same time imagine that an Almighty being can think of no other earth but this and has to govern this one very imperfectly. But the old theosophical view makes the universe a vast, complete, and perfect whole.

Now the moment we postulate a double evolution, physical and spiritual, we have at the same time to admit that it can only be carried on by reincarnation. This is, in fact, demonstrated by science. It is shown that the matter of the earth and of all things physical upon it was at one time either gaseous or molten; that it cooled; that it altered; that from its alterations and evolutions at last were produced all the great variety of things and beings. This, on the physical plane, is transformation or change from one form to another. The total mass of matter is about the same as in the beginning of this globe, with a very minute allowance for some star dust. Hence it must have been changed over and over again, and thus been physically reformed and re-embodied. Of course, to be strictly accurate, we cannot use the word reincarnation, because "incarnate" refers to flesh. Let us say "re-embodied," and then we see that both for matter and for man there has been a constant change of form and this is, broadly speaking, "reincarnation." As to the whole mass of matter, the doctrine is that it will all be raised to man's estate when man has gone further on himself. There is no residuum left after man's final salvation which in a mysterious way is to be disposed of or done away with in some remote dust-heap of nature. The true doctrine allows for nothing like that, and at the same time is not afraid to give the true disposition of what would seem to be a residuum. It is all worked up into other states, for as the philosophy declares there is no inorganic matter whatever but that every atom is alive and has the germ of self-consciousness, it must follow that one day it will all have been changed. Thus what is now called human flesh is so much matter that one day was wholly mineral, later on vegetable, and now refined into human atoms. At a point of time very far from now the present vegetable matter will have been raised to the animal stage and what we now use as our organic or fleshy matter will have changed by transformation through evolution into self-conscious

thinkers, and so on up the whole scale until the time shall come when what is now known as mineral matter will have passed on to the human stage and out into that of thinker. Then at the coming on of another great period of evolution the mineral matter of that time will be some which is now passing through its lower transformations on other planets and in other systems of worlds. This is perhaps a "fanciful" scheme for the men of the present day, who are so accustomed to being called bad, sinful, weak, and utterly foolish from their birth that they fear to believe the truth about themselves, but for the disciples of the ancient theosophists it is not impossible or fanciful, but is logical and vast. And no doubt it will one day be admitted by everyone when the mind of the western race has broken away from Mosaic chronology and Mosaic ideas of man and nature. Therefore as to reincarnation and metempsychosis we say that they are first to be applied to the whole cosmos and not alone to man. But as man is the most interesting object to himself, we will consider in detail its application to him.

This is the most ancient of doctrines and is believed in now by more human minds than the number of those who do not hold it. The millions in the East almost all accept it; it was taught by the Greeks; a large number of the Chinese now believe it as their forefathers did before them; the Jews thought it was true, and it has not disappeared from their religion; and Jesus, who is called the founder of Christianity, also believed and taught it. In the early Christian church it was known and taught, and the very best of the fathers of the church believed and promulgated it.

Christians should remember that Jesus was a Jew who thought his mission was to Jews, for he says in St. Matthew, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He must have well known the doctrines held by them. They all believed in reincarnation. For them Moses, Adam, Noah, Seth, and others had returned to earth, and at the time of Jesus it was currently believed that the old prophet Elias was yet to return. So we find, first, that Jesus never denied the doctrine, and on various occasions assented to it, as when he said that John the Baptist was actually the Elias of old whom the people were expecting. All this can be seen by consulting St. Matthew in chapters XVII, XI, and others.

In these it is very clear that Jesus is shown as approving the

doctrine of reincarnation. And following Jesus we find St. Paul, in Romans IX, speaking of Esau and Jacob being actually in existence before they were born, and later such great Christian fathers as Origen, Synesius, and others believing and teaching the theory. In Proverbs VIII, 22, we have Solomon saying that when the earth was made he was present, and that, long before he could have been born as Solomon, his delights were in the habitable parts of earth with the sons of men. St. John the Revelator says in Revs. III, 12, he was told in a vision which refers to the voice of God or the voice of one speaking for God, that whosoever should overcome would not be under the necessity of "going out" any more, that is, would not need to be reincarnated. For five hundred years after Jesus the doctrine was taught in the church until the Council of Constantinople. Then a condemnation was passed upon a phase of the question which has been regarded by many as against reincarnation, but if that condemnation goes against the words of Jesus it is of no effect. It does go against him, and thus the church is in the position of saying in effect that Jesus did not know enough to curse, as it did, a doctrine known and taught in his day and which was brought to his notice prominently and never condemned but in fact approved by him. Christianity is a Jewish religion, and this doctrine of reincarnation belongs to it historically by succession from the Jews, and also by reason of its having been taught by Jesus and the early fathers of the church. If there be any truthful or logical way for the Christian church to get out of this position — excluding, of course, dogmas of the church — the theosophist would like to be shown it. Indeed, the theosophist holds that whenever a professed Christian denies the theory he thereby sets up his judgment against that of Jesus, who must have known more about the matter than those who follow him. It is the anathema hurled by the church council and the absence of the doctrine from the teaching now that have damaged Christianity and made of all the Christian nations people who pretend to be followers of Jesus and the law of love, but who really as nations are followers of the Mosaic law of retaliation. For alone in reincarnation is the answer to all the problems of life, and in it and Karma is the force that will make men pursue in fact the ethics they have in theory. It is the aim of the old philosophy to restore this doctrine to whatsoever religion has lost it; and hence we call

it the “lost chord of Christianity.”

But who or what is it that reincarnates? It is not the body, for that dies and disintegrates; and but few of us would like to be chained forever to such bodies as we now have, admitted to be infected with disease except in the case of the savage. It is not the astral body, for, as shown, that also has its term and must go to pieces after the physical has gone. Nor is it the passions and desires. They, to be sure, have a very long term, because they have the power to reproduce themselves in each life so long as we do not eradicate them. And reincarnation provides for that, since we are given by it many opportunities of slowly one by one, killing off the desires and passions which mar the heavenly picture of the spiritual man.

It has been shown how the passional part of us coalesces with the astral after death and makes a seeming being that has a short life to live while it is disintegrating. When the separation is complete between the body that has died, the astral body, and the passions and desires — life having begun to busy itself with other forms — the Higher Triad, *Manas*, *Buddhi*, and *Atma*, who are the real man, immediately go into another state, and when that state, which is called *Devachan*, or heaven, is over, they are attracted back to earth for reincarnation. They are the immortal part of us; they, in fact, and no other are we. This should be firmly grasped by the mind, for upon its clear understanding depends the comprehension of the entire doctrine. What stands in the way of the modern western man’s seeing this clearly is the long training we have all had in materialistic science and materializing religion, both of which have made the mere physical body too prominent. The one has taught of matter alone and the other has preached the resurrection of the body, a doctrine against common sense, fact, logic, and testimony. But there is no doubt that the theory of the bodily resurrection has arisen from the corruption of the older and true teaching. Resurrection is founded on what Job says about seeing his redeemer in his flesh, and on St. Paul’s remark that the body was raised incorruptible. But Job was an Egyptian who spoke of seeing his teacher or initiator, who was the redeemer, and Jesus and Paul referred to the spiritual body only.

Although reincarnation is the law of nature, the complete trinity of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* does not yet fully incarnate in this

race. They use and occupy the body by means of the entrance of *Manas*, the lowest of the three, and the other two shine upon it from above, constituting the God in Heaven. This was symbolized in the old Jewish teaching about the Heavenly Man who stands with his head in heaven and his feet in hell. That is, the head *Atma* and *Buddhi* are yet in heaven, and the feet, *Manas*, walk in hell, which is the body and physical life. For that reason man is not yet fully conscious, and reincarnations are needed to at last complete the incarnation of the whole trinity in the body. When that has been accomplished the race will have become as gods, and the godlike trinity being in full possession the entire mass of matter will be perfected and raised up for the next step. This is the real meaning of "the word made flesh." It was so grand a thing in the case of any single person, such as Jesus or Buddha, as to be looked upon as a divine incarnation. And out of this, too, comes the idea of the crucifixion, for *Manas* is thus crucified for the purpose of raising up the thief to paradise.

It is because the trinity is not yet incarnate in the race that life has so many mysteries, some of which are showing themselves from day to day in all the various experiments made on and in man.

The physician knows not what life is nor why the body moves as it does, because the spiritual portion is yet enshrouded in the clouds of heaven; the scientist is wandering in the dark, confounded and confused by all that hypnotism and other strange things bring before him, because the conscious man is out of sight on the very top of the divine mountain, thus compelling the learned to speak of the "subconscious mind," the "latent personality," and the like; and the priest can give us no light at all because he denies man's god-like nature, reduces all to the level of original sin, and puts upon our conception of God the black mark of inability to control or manage the creation without invention of expedients to cure supposed errors. But this old truth solves the riddle and paints God and Nature in harmonious colors.

Reincarnation does not mean that we go into animal forms after death, as is believed by some Eastern peoples. "Once a man always a man" is the saying in the Great Lodge. But it would not be too much punishment for some men were it possible to condemn them to rebirth in brute bodies; however, nature does not go by sentiment but by law, and we, not being able to see all, cannot say that the

brutal man is brute all through his nature. And evolution having brought *Manas* the Thinker and Immortal Person on to this plane, cannot send him back to the brute which has not *Manas*.

By looking into two explanations for the literal acceptance by some people in the East of those laws of Manu which seem to teach the transmigrating into brutes, insects, and so on, we can see how the true student of this doctrine will not fall into the same error.

The first is that the various verses and books teaching such transmigration have to do with the actual method of reincarnation, that is, with the explanation of the actual physical processes which have to be undergone by the Ego in passing from the unembodied to the embodied state, and also with the roads, ways, or means of descent from the invisible to the visible plane. This has not yet been plainly explained in Theosophical books, because on the one hand it is a delicate matter, and on the other the details would not as yet be received even by Theosophists with credence, although one day they will be. And as these details are not of the greatest importance they are not now expounded. But as we know that no human body is formed without the union of the sexes, and that the germs of such production are locked up in the sexes and must come from food which is taken into the body, it is obvious that foods have something to do with the reincarnating of the Ego. Now if the road to reincarnation leads through certain foods and none other, it may be possible that if the Ego gets entangled in food which will not lead to the germ of physical reproduction, a punishment is indicated where Manu says that such and such practices will lead to transmigration, which is then a "hindrance." I throw this out so far for the benefit of certain theosophists who read these and whose own theories on this subject are now rather vague and in some instances based on quite other hypotheses.

The second explanation is, that inasmuch as nature intends us to use the matter which comes into our body and astral body for the purpose, among others, of benefiting the matter by the impress it gets from association with the human Ego, if we use it so as to give it only a brutal impression it must fly back to the animal kingdom to be absorbed there instead of being refined and kept on the human plane. And as all the matter which the human Ego gathered to it retains the stamp or photographic impression of the human being, the matter transmigrates to the lower level when

given an animal impress by the Ego. This actual fact in the great chemical laboratory of nature could easily be misconstrued by the ignorant. But the present-day students know that once *Manas* the Thinker has arrived on the scene he does not return to baser forms; first, because he does not wish to, and second, because he cannot. For just as the blood in the body is prevented by valves from rushing back and engorging the heart, so in this greater system of universal circulation the door is shut behind the Thinker and prevents his retrocession. Reincarnation as a doctrine applying to the real man does not teach transmigration into kingdoms of nature below the human.

Unless we deny the immortality of man and the existence of soul, there are no sound arguments against the doctrine of pre-existence and re-birth save such as rest on the dictum of the church that each soul is a new creation. This dictum can be supported only by blind dogmatism, for given a soul we must sooner or later arrive at the theory of re-birth, because even if each soul is new on this earth it must keep on living somewhere after passing away, and in view of the known order of nature will have other bodies in other planets or spheres. Theosophy applies to the self – the thinker – the same laws which are seen everywhere in operation throughout nature, and those are all varieties of the great law that effects follow causes and no effect is without a cause. The soul's immortality – believed in by the mass of humanity – demands embodiment here or elsewhere, and to be embodied means reincarnation. If we come to this earth for but a few years and then go to some other, the soul must be embodied there as well as here, and if we have traveled from some other world we must have had there too our proper vesture. The powers of mind and the laws governing its motion, its attachment, and its detachment as given in theosophical philosophy show that its re-embodiment must be here, where it moved and worked, until such time as the mind is able to overcome the forces which chain it to this globe. To permit the involved entity to transfer itself to another scene of action before it had overcome all the causes drawing it here and without its having worked out its responsibilities to other entities in the same stream of evolution would be unjust and contrary to the powerful occult laws and forces which continually operate upon it. The early Christian Fathers saw this,

and taught that the soul had fallen into matter and was obliged by the law of its nature to toil upward again to the place from which it came. They used an old Greek hymn which ran:

Eternal Mind, thy seedling spark,
 Through this thin vase of clay,
 Athwart the waves of chaos dark
 Emits a timorous ray.
 This mind enfolding soul is sown,
 Incarnate germ in earth:
 In pity, blessed Lord, then own
 What claims in Thee its birth.
 Far forth from Thee, thou central fire,
 To earth's sad bondage cast,
 Let not the trembling spark expire;
 Absorb thine own at last!

Each human being has a definite character different from every other human being, and masses of beings aggregated into nations show as wholes that the national force and distinguishing peculiarities go to make up a definite and separate national character. These differences, both individual and national, are due to essential character and not to education. Even the doctrine of the survival of the fittest should show this, for the fitness cannot come from nothing but must at last show itself from the coming to the surface of the actual inner character. And as both individuals and nations among those who are ahead in the struggle with nature exhibit an immense force in their character, we must find a place and time where the force was evolved. These, Theosophy says, are this earth and the whole period during which the human race has been on the planet.

So, then, while heredity has something to do with the difference in character as to force and morale, swaying the soul and mind a little and furnishing also the appropriate place for receiving reward and punishment, it is not the cause for the essential nature shown by every one.

But all these differences, such as those shown by babes from birth, by adults as character comes forth more and more, and by nations in their history, are due to long experience gained during many lives on earth, are the outcome of the soul's own evolution. A survey of one short human life gives no ground for the

production of his inner nature. It is needful that each soul should have all possible experience, and one life cannot give this even under the best conditions. It would be folly for the Almighty to put us here for such a short time, only to remove us just when we had begun to see the object of life and the possibilities in it. The mere selfish desire of a person to escape the trials and discipline of life is not enough to set nature's laws aside, so the soul must be reborn until it has ceased to set in motion the cause of rebirth, after having developed character up to its possible limit as indicated by all the varieties of human nature, when every experience has been passed through, and not until all of truth that can be known has been acquired. The vast disparity among men in respect to capacity compels us, if we wish to ascribe justice to Nature or to God, to admit reincarnation and to trace the origin of the disparity back to the past lives of the Ego. For people are as much hindered and handicapped, abused and made the victims of seeming injustice because of limited capacity, as they are by reason of circumstances of birth or education. We see the uneducated rising above circumstances of family and training, and often those born in good families have very small capacity; but the troubles of nations and families arise from want of capacity more than from any other cause. And if we consider savage races only, there the seeming injustice is enormous. For many savages have good actual brain capacity, but still are savage. This is because the Ego in that body is still savage and undeveloped, for in contrast to the savage there are many civilized men with small actual brain force who are not savage in nature because the indwelling Ego has had long experience in civilization during other lives, and being a more developed soul has power to use the brain instrument to its highest limit.

Each man feels and knows that he has an individuality of his own, a personal identity which bridges over not only the gaps made by sleep but also those sometimes supervening on temporary lesions in the brain. This identity never breaks from beginning to end of life in the normal person, and only the persistence and eternal character of the soul will account for it.

So, ever since we began to remember, we know that our personal identity has not failed us, no matter how bad may be our memory. This disposes of the argument that identity depends on

recollection, for the reason that if it did depend alone on recollection we should each day have to begin over again, as we cannot remember the events of the past in detail, and some minds remember but little yet feel their personal identity. And as it is often seen that some who remember the least insist as strongly as the others on their personal identity, that persistence of feeling must come from the old and immortal soul.

Viewing life and its probable object, with all the varied experience possible for man, one must be forced to the conclusion that a single life is not enough for carrying out all that is intended by Nature to say nothing of what man himself desires to do. The scale of variety in experience is enormous. There is a vast range of powers latent in man which we see may be developed if opportunity be given. Knowledge infinite in scope and diversity lies before us, and especially in these days when special investigation is the rule. We perceive that we have high aspirations with no time to reach up to their measure, while the great troop of passions and desires, selfish motives and ambitions, war with us and among themselves, pursuing us even to the door of death. All these have to be tried, conquered, used, subdued. One life is not enough for all this. To say that we have but one life here with such possibilities put before us and impossible of development is to make the universe and life a huge and cruel joke perpetrated by a powerful God who is thus accused, by those who believe in a special creation of souls, of triumphing and playing with puny man just because that man is small and the creature of the Almighty. A human life at most is seventy years; statistics reduce this to about forty; and out of that little remainder a large part is spent in sleep and another part in childhood. Thus in one life it is perfectly impossible to attain to the merest fraction of what Nature evidently has in view. We see many truths vaguely which a life gives us no time to grasp, and especially is this so when men have to make such a struggle to live at all. Our faculties are small or dwarfed or weak; one life gives no opportunity to alter this; we perceive other powers latent in us that cannot possibly be brought out in such a small space of time; and we have much more than a suspicion that the extent of the field of truth is vastly greater than the narrow circle we are confined to. It is not reasonable to suppose that either God or nature projects us into a body simply to fill us with bitterness

because we can have no other opportunity here, but rather we must conclude that a series of incarnations has led to the present condition, and that the process of coming here again and again must go on for the purpose of affording us the opportunity needed.

The Ocean of Theosophy, 60-69, 79-83

W. Q. JUDGE



The temporal future will consist of a greater number of successive lives. It is true that, in the long run, the later will be better than the earlier. But the rate of improvement may be very slow — so slow that it might be imperceptible for centuries — and it may be broken by periods of oscillation in which a man was actually in a worse condition than he had been previously. With regard to knowledge, to virtue, and to love, we have no ground for supposing that improvement will not be very slow, and that it will not be broken by intervals of deterioration. And with regard to happiness, there is no form of suffering which history records to have happened in the past, which may not lie in the path of any one of us in the future. . . .

Such life as ours now, in which sin jostles with virtue, and doubt with confidence, and hatred with love, cannot satisfy us, but it can teach us a great deal — far more than can be learned between a single birth and a single death. . . . No man can learn fully in one life the lessons of unbroken health and of bodily sickness, of riches and of poverty, of study and action, of comradeship and of isolation, of defiance and of obedience, of virtue and of vice. And yet they are all so good to learn. Is it not worth much to be able to hope that what we have missed in one life may come to us in another?

And though the way is long, it can be no more wearisome than a single life. For with death we leave behind us memory and old age, and fatigue. We may die old but we shall be born young. And death acquires a deeper and more gracious significance when we regard it as part of the continually recurring rhythm of progress — as inevitable, as natural, and as benevolent as sleep.

The Nature of Existence

J. McT. E. McTAGGART