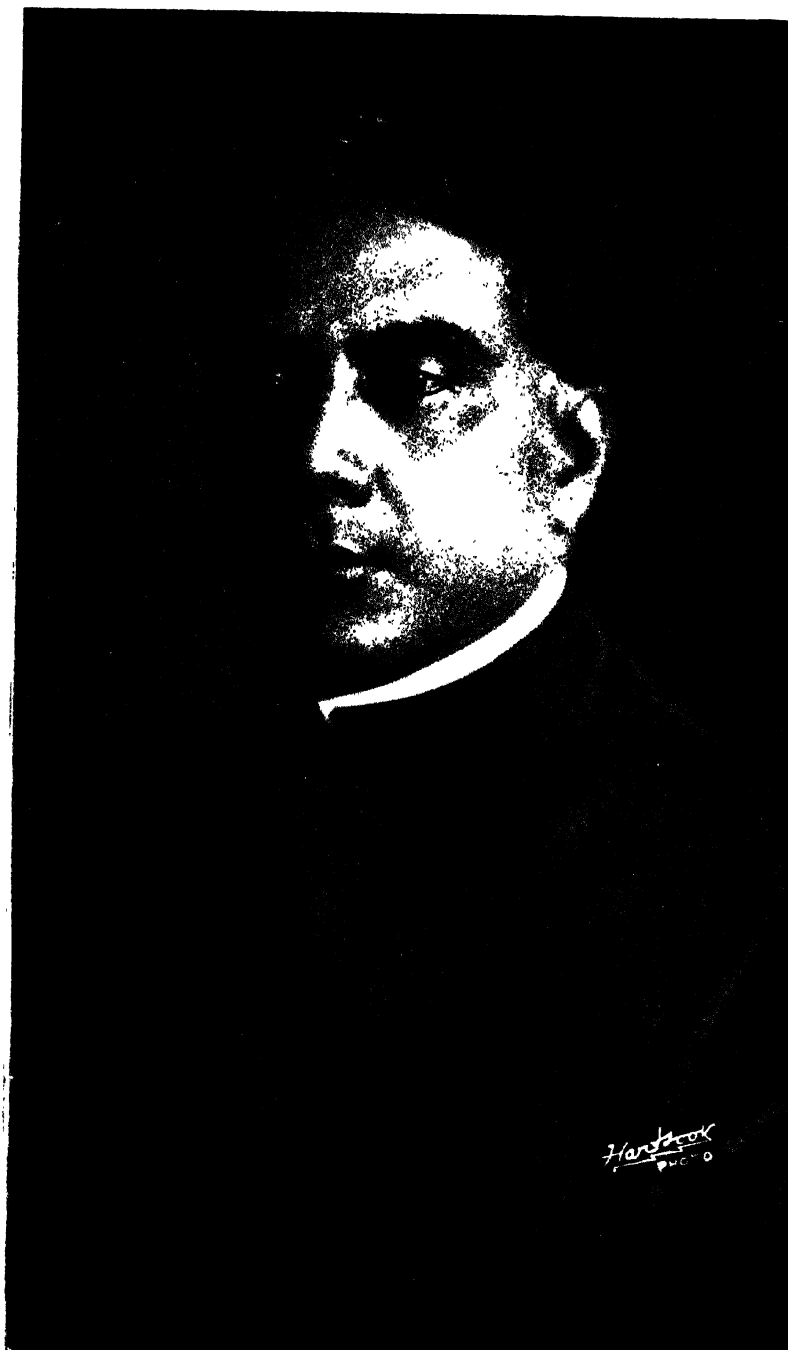


LIFE BEYOND DEATH



Abhedananda Memorial Series No. 1.

LIFE BEYOND DEATH

A CRITICAL STUDY OF SPIRITUALISM

by

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA



RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH

19B, RAJA RAJKRISHNA STREET,

CALCUTTA-6

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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

The fourth revised edition of the book is now placed before the reading public for their careful reading and revered study. It has been revised by Swami Prajnanananda. We hope that this new edition will also get appreciation as before.

Ramakrishna Vedanta Math
19 B, Raja Rajkrishna Street,
Calcutta-6
December, 1965.

THE PUBLISHER

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Swami Abhedananda delivered from time to time a number of lectures on spiritualism in response to the invitations from some well-known institutions of culture during his long stay in America. These lectures have now been published together in book form under the name of *Life Beyond Death* as the first contribution of the *Abhedananda Memorial Series* to the reading public. Three of these lectures, formerly published as separate pamphlets, have also been incorporated in this volume.

Unlike many of the books on spiritualism the present work has a special feature of its own. Its pages do not narrate the legends and tales of ghosts and other supernatural beings as one in most cases finds in such books that claim to unveil the mystery of the world beyond the grave. The treatment of the subject is purely a scientific one, and it has taken

a new departure from the prevailing methods and systems of presentation of this subject.

For some reasons or other a great majority amongst the learned people in modern times do not view spiritualism with favour and appreciation. Their attitude towards spiritualism is one of indifference. There are again others who are credulous, and they, without any question or investigation, like to believe its everything to be true. The present work is fully free from both these prejudices, and never subscribes to any of these blindly biased views. It has given an impartial or dispassionate view on spiritualism, showing wisely and ably its merits and demerits, its bright and dark sides as well. Spiritualism, in these lectures, has never been upheld, nor totally denied. One, going through these lectures, realizes to what extent spiritualism should be accepted and to what extent it ought to be rejected. Even those who are not in favour of spiritualism or who delight to scoff at it, will find in these lectures many things instructive and valuable.

Whether spiritualism is really helpful or injurious to men as regards their religious perfection, whether there is any way other than spiritualism, more certain, systematic and rational in order to reach the state of Self-realization should be known by every inquisitive mind. And these knotty problems have been clearly solved by the philosopher-saint in these lectures with the remarkable characteristics of his own

One thing should be made clear. The repetitions of a few instances have crept in some of the lec-

tures. But their omission, in our humble opinion, will be of no avail, as the idea conveyed in these will lose much of its force and the addresses will appear somewhat mutilated.

Besides the lectures mentioned above, the Swami's view on the soul-life revealed in the process of questions and answers, his discussions with eminent American scholars on soul's pre-existence, immortality, reincarnation and eternity have also been reprinted from some leading journals of America as to form the appendices of the book.

In addition to these, the extracts from the Vedic passages, the utterances of some mystics, poets and philosophers and several notes have been annexed by the editor to it, for the convenience of the readers.

Ramakrishna Vedanta Math
19B, Raja Rajkrishna Street,
Calcutta-6
December, 1944.

THE PUBLISHER

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The second edition of *Life Beyond Death* is offered to the reading public with some corrections and new additions. All the notes and footnotes in it have been added by Swami Prajnanananda, the editor. Some new plates of ectoplasm and spirit materialised are also added to this new addition from B. V. Schrenck Notzing's *Phenomena of Materialization*, and for this we are indebted to its Publisher. We are glad to see that the first edition of this book got

a warm reception from all corners of the globe, and we hope that this present edition will also be appreciated by seekers of truth and knowledge.

Ramakrishna Vedanta Math
19B, Raja Rajkrishna Street,
Calcutta-6
December, 1948.

THE PUBLISHER

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The third edition is now presented to the reading public, and we hope that it will get appreciation from them. Some of the new plates of the spirits have been added to this third edition.

Ramakrishna Vedanta Math
19B, Raja Rajkrishna Street,
Calcutta-6.
December, 1960.

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CHAPTER ONE

MODERN SCIENCE AND HIGHER SPIRITUALISM

The Experimental Spiritualism—Sir William Crookes—Katie King—Mrs. Florence Cook—The scientific study of the phenomena of Spiritualism—Scientific thinkers—Maurice Maeterlinck—Prof. Myers—Dr. Hodgeson—Prof. William James—Mr. C. N. Jones—Sir Oliver Lodge—Alfred R. Wallace—Dr. Thomas Jay Hudson—Camille Flammarion—Prof. Hyslop of Columbia—Spiritism cannot explain any of our vital questions—True Spiritualism—Stanton Moses.

During the last sixty years, Spiritualism has made considerable progress, convincing many scientific minds, who have been earnestly seeking for the truth of man's survival after death. The Experimental Spiritualism began in America in 1870. And in the following year, Sir William Crookes, a scientist of great reputation and a man of extraordinary genius, began his investigations with the aid of the medium Mrs. Florence Cook. It will be needless to go into the details of Sir W. Crookes' experiments which lasted for three years with that celebrated medium. During this period, he took all precautions against all possible fraud or trickery imaginable, and he employed scientific methods of observation and experiments with delicate instruments. The seances were held in his own house with honest friends who were equally eager to discover whether there was any truth in the spirit phenomena. Many Americans became familiar with the name of Katie King, the spirit-control of Mrs. Florence Cook. She materialized herself, her pulsations were re-



corded, her heart-beating was heard, she was photographed and she distributed locks of her materialized hair to those who were present there. We should remember that all these happened under strictly test conditions in his own rooms, where electric wires with bells were fixed on the walls, so that the least little intrusion from outside could be instantly detected. Sir William Crookes was at first ridiculed by the scientific world, but he had the courage of his convictions which led him to publish the reports of his experiments, and he kept on experimenting ever since.

Sir W. Crookes was also aided by another celebrated medium, Mr. D. D. Home, who was more powerful than Mrs. Florence Cook in withstanding antagonistic influences, and most of his seances were not in darkness, but in bright light.

For the scientific study of the phenomena of Spiritualism, the Society for the Psychical Research was established in London in 1885, under the auspices of eminent men of science in England. It is commonly known as S. P. R. The records of this Society have shown how marvellous were the scientific patience and conscientiousness of men like Edmund Gurney, Dr. F. W. H. Myers, Frank Podmore and their successors. Those who have read Myers' great work entitled *Human Personality and Its Survival after Bodily Death*, will realize the truth of this statement.

Other scientific thinkers like Alfred Russell Wallace, Robert Dale Owen, Prof. Aksakof, Richard Hodgson, William James of Harvard, and Sir

Oliver Lodge, the Principal of the University of Birmingham, England, have spared no pains to make correct investigations under test conditions regarding the truth of spirit manifestations. Well has it been said by Maurice Maeterlinck, referring to their laborious task :

‘Not an incident is admitted that is not supported by unimpeachable testimony, by definite written records, and convincing corroboration ; in a word, it is hardly possible to contest the essential veracity of the majority of them, unless we begin by making up our minds to deny any positive value to human evidence.’¹

We are all familiar with the fact that Prof. Myers, who was the President of S. P. R. for many years, promised his friends that he would come back after his bodily death in a decisive manner. He kept his promise, and a month after his death, communicated with Sir Oliver Lodge through the noted medium Mrs. Thompson, while she was entranced. Myers’ identity was recognized by the first few words he spoke. It was really he and no one else. He said that it was very difficult for him to convey his ideas through mediums : ‘They were translating as a school boy does his first line of Virgil’. Referring to his present condition, Myers said that he groped his way as if through passages, before he knew he was dead. He thought he had lost his way in a strange town, and even when he saw people that he knew were dead, he thought they were only visions.²

Dr. Hodgeson, who was the Secretary of the American branch of the S. P. R. of which William

1. *Our Eternity*, pp. 82-83.

2. *Our Eternity*, p. 103.

James was Vice-president, promised to come back after his death, and a week after his departure he came back and communicated by automatic writing through Mrs. Piper, and William James was present at these sittings.

William James of Harvard, also in his turn, promised to come back after his death ; he kept his promise by communicating with Mr. C. N. Jones, the President of the American Institute of Scientific Research, and formerly Professor of Applied Mathematics in the University of Michigan. Mr. C. N. Jones gave the details of the communications in his article which was published in *New York Papers*.³ The first communication was received on the evening of Oct. 22nd, 1910. Five more communications followed one another and the last was on March 11th, 1911. In these, Prof. James tried his best to establish his personal identity, and Mr. Jones and others, who were present there, were all satisfied. Among other things which are interesting Prof. James said :

'I am thankful that there are some who are perfectly willing that I should come to them. I mean this kind man here, who is standing by my side, and who lets me use him—his body. He steps out and lets me use his body and I am thankful. I don't to injure it or make it unfit for him in any way.'

It is said that Prof. James shook hands with his friends.

Sir Oliver Lodge, after making many scientific experiments with the help of Mrs. Piper and other

3. *Times*, Dec., 10th, 1911.

mediums, is now convinced that there is the survival of life after death. He said in his Presidential address before British Association, held in September, 1913 :

‘In justice to myself and my co-workers I must risk annoying my present hearers not only by leaving on record our conviction that occurrence now regarded as occult can be examined and reduced to order by the methods of science carefully and persistently applied, but by going further and saying with the utmost brevity that already the facts so examined have convinced me, that memory and affection are not limited to that association with matter by which alone they can manifest themselves here and now, and that personality persists beyond bodily death. The evidence, to my mind, goes to prove that discarnate intelligence, under certain conditions, may interact with us on the material side, thus indirectly coming within our scientific ken’.

The great English scientist Alfred R. Wallace said :

‘No more evidence is needed to prove Spiritualism, for no accepted fact in science has a greater or strong array of proof in its behalf’.

Dr. Thomas Jay Hudson, author of the *Law Psychic Phenomena*, said :

‘The man who denies Spiritualism today is not entitled to be called a skeptic, he is simply ignorant’.

Camille Flammarion, W. T. Stead, Prof. Hyslop and others have been equally convinced that discarnate spirits can communicate with us. Thus we see that such great men of science, as I have mentioned, have already accepted the truth upon which modern Spiritualism is founded.

Although many of the professional mediums have been pitifully exposed as frauds, still there are genuine mediums and authentic spirit manifestations

which cannot be explained by telepathy or any other theory than that of the communication of discranate spirits. On many occasions, the audience is deceived by the earth-bound spirits. The manifestations on the material plane, such as table turning, rapping knocks of the spirit, are ordinarily understood by Spiritualism, but all such phenomena belong to lower class of Spiritualism or Spiritism, as it is called by many. Spiritism can only satisfy our curiosity and does not explain any of our vital questions. But true Spiritualism should be distinguished from that phase which is called Spiritism. Higher Spiritualism, therefore, is the name for that which starting from the belief in a life after death, reveals the nature of the soul and its relation to God. This higher Spiritualism is at the root of all great religions of the world. Communications with socalled angles or messengers of God or *Devas* or bright spirits, as they are called in India, have been the source of knowledge and inspiration of the Prophets and Seers of the Old and New Testaments. From the time of Abraham, Jacob and Moses down to the time of Christ and his disciples, all Prophets and Seers saw the spirits, heard them speak and followed their teachings. As is Christianity and Judaism, so it is in the other religions of the world. As revelations came to the sincere and earnest souls of the past, so they have come even in this age.

Those, who have read the spirit-teachings, which came through the mediumship of Stainton Moses, will remember how higher spirits under thenames of Doctor, Rector, Imperator revealed their messages

to help mankind, to bring them out of dogmas, creeds and superstition of the existing churches.

Here we should remember that this Stainton Moses was an orthodox Anglican clergyman of England. He was dogmatic and creed-bound, but still through him came messages which were not only astounding to him but to the Christian world at large.

CHAPTER TWO

DOES THE SOUL EXIST AFTER DEATH

What the atheists and agnostics think—Carvākas—Solomon in Old Testament—The dormant question about our life and death—The modern scientists—Buchner the materialist—J. Luys—Percival Lowell—Herbert Spencer—Prof. W. K. Califford—The Vedānta philosophers—John Stuart Mill—G. J. Romanes—Dr. Schiller—Kant—Hume—Those who depend on sense perception—The Yogis in India—The appearance of the 'double'—What sense perception—The Yogis in India—The appearance of the 'double'—What science says—Prof. William James—The test of spiritualistic seances—The Hindus—The Vedānta philosophy—Christian missionaries—*Bhagavad Gitā*—Ralph Waldo Emerson—Personality—The world of the *Pitrs*—Heaven and hell—The Persians—The Egyptians—The Chaldeans—The Christian idea—Prof. Huxley—The soul.

One of the most poetical of the *Upanisads*, I mean the *Katha*, which has been translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, under the title of the *The Secret of Death*, begins with this inquiry :

'There is this doubt ; when a man dies some say that he is gone for ever, that he does not exist, while others hold that he still lives ; which of these is true ?'

Various answers have been given to this question ; metaphysics, philosophy, science and religion have tried to solve this problem. All the same time, attempts have also been made to suppress this question and to prevent inquiry as to whether or not man exists after death. Hundreds of thinkers have brought forward all sorts of arguments to do

4. येऽयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्येऽस्तीत्येके नायस्तीति चेके ।

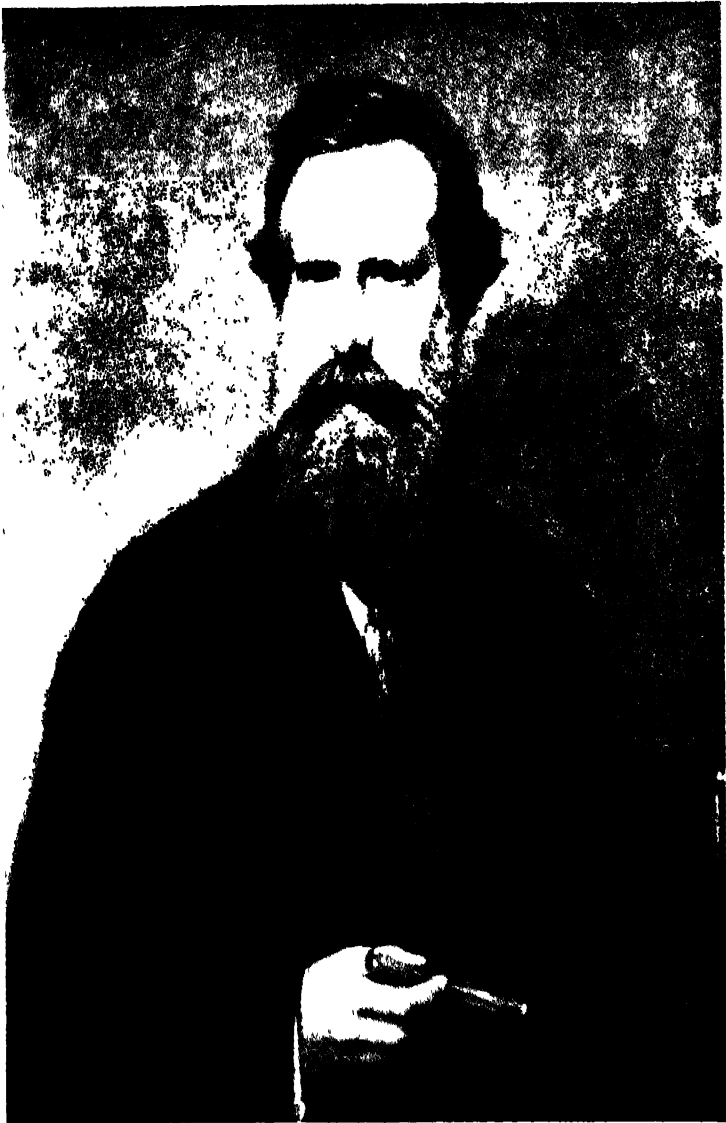
एतद् विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाहं वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥

—कठ उपनिषत् १।२०



The Medium and the Spirit
(Prof. Crooks is showing that the Medium and the Spirit are
different from each other)

Painted by S. Drizin



Sir William Crooks
(the picture taken from the Oil-Painting of P. Ludovici, of the
National Portrait Gallery)

away with questions bearing upon this momentous subject.

From ancient times, there have been atheistic and agnostic thinkers in India who denied the existence of the soul after the death of the body. They are known as Cārvākas. They believe that the body is the soul, and that the soul does not exist outside of the body, and that when the body dies, the soul is also dead and gone. They believe in nothing that cannot be perceived by the sense. Their motto is :

‘As long as you live, do not fail to enjoy. Live comfortably and enjoy the pleasure of life. Do not think of the future. Get all that you need and wish ; if you have not got money, then beg or borrow it, for when the body is burnt into ashes no one will have to be accountable for your deeds.’⁵

Such Cārvākas we find in almost every country. For instance, in the Old Testament we read, Solomon says :

‘Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart * * * Live joyfully with the wife—whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest’. (*Ecclix.* 7, 9, 10.)

The followers of such thinkers are spreading very rapidly and their number is increasing every day.

-
5. न स्वर्गो नापवर्गा वा नेवात्मा पारलौकिकः ।
नेव वर्णाश्रमादीनिं क्रियाश्च फलदायिकाः ॥

* * * *

यावज्जीवेत् सुखम् जोवेत् ऋणम् कृत्वा घृतम् पिबेत् ।

भस्यीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनम् कुतः ।

—सर्वदर्शनसंग्रहे बृहस्पति

They are now known as atheists, agnostics, materialists, etc. According to this class of thinkers, those who believe in the existence of the soul as separate from the body, or in a life after death, are ignorant and superstitious fools, while those who follow their ideas, are clever and intelligent beings. Most of them hold that there is not such thing as soul. No argument can convince them or change their views, because they will not admit the existence of anything which lies beyond the reach of their sense, or which cannot be perceived by limited powers of the senses. They have written volumes after volumes against the existence of the soul, and have tried to stop such useless questions of the mind ; but in spite of their efforts, have they succeeded in stopping that innate question : 'what remains after death ?'—which rises spontaneously in almost every human heart ? No. The same question rises today as it arose thousands of years ago. No one can stop it, because it is inseparably connected with our nature.

The same question was asked by saints and sinners, by Prophets and priests, by kings and beggars amongst all nations, in all climes. We are discussing the same question today ; and it will be discussed in the future. We may forget it for the time being in the turmoil and struggles of our lives ; we may not ask it when we are deeply absorbed in comforts, luxuries and sense enjoyments ; we may delude ourselves by various false argumentations ; but the moment we encounter the sudden appearance of death, the moment we see that some one of our nearest

and dearest is breathing his last, we stop for a while and ask within ourselves ; What is this ? Where is he gone ? Does he still exist ? What has become of him ? That dormant question reappears in a new form and disturbs our peace of mind. Then we begin to inquire ; but at the very threshold of our inquiry, we find an adamant wall which it is almost impossible to break through. Weak intellects stop there ; their feeble attempts to cross that wall produce no result. That wall is nothing but the belief that the body is the producer of the soul, that the soul is the result of the physical form we call the 'body'. Those who can overcome this strong barrier, can understand whether or not the soul exists after death. The old crude way of inferring the existence of soul after death and a future life for tall men, women and children from the tradition of a single miraculous resurrection of a certain person, no longer appeals to our reason. The days of believing blindly in the authority of any one's saying are gone by. We are no longer children ; we want maturer reason ; we want to discuss that question more deeply. Those who believe in that miraculous resurrection, will perhaps say that those who do not believe in it, have no hope. But we no longer accept their statements. The time has come when we want to discuss the question scientifically, psychologically, philosophically, metaphysically, and in all other possible ways.

Now let us see whether the explanation that body is the cause of the soul, is satisfactory or not. Taking it for granted that the soul, or the mass of

intelligence,⁶ or whatever you may call it, is the outcome of the combinations of matter which make up the body, we ask : What is the cause of that body ? What force combines the matter in the form of the body ? What force is there which forms your body in one way and my body in another ? What is the cause of those distinctions ? The materialistic Cārvākas will answer that this body was caused by another body of the parents. As the parents produce this body, so the body of the parents is the cause of this body. But that is not the true answer, for instead of explaining the cause of this body and this combination of matter, they show us another combination of matter, and the question remains the same. What is the cause of the combination of matter,—the parents body ? They answer, another combination of matter, and so on. Instead of answering the question and explaining the cause of the combination of matter, they say that this combination is the result of another combination, which ultimately leads to the fallacy of *regressus ad infinitum*. The method of explaining the soul by the body is like the process of explaining the cause by the effect, which is putting the cart before the horse.

Modern physiologists, anatomists, pathologists, and a host of other materialistic and agnostic thin-

6. स यथा सैन्धवधनोऽनन्तरोऽवाह्याः कृतस्नो रसधन एव, एवं वा अरेज्यमात्मानन्तरोऽवाह्याः कृतस्नो प्रज्जानधन एव ; एतेभ्यो भूतेभ्यः ऋमुत्थाय तान्येवानुबिनश्यति, न प्रेत्य संज्ञास्तीत्यरे ब्रवीमिति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः ।

—*Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad, 4.5.1.* †

kers, however, hold that body, or the combination of matter, produces thought, intelligence, consciousness, mind or soul. They teach that thought, or intelligence, or consciousness, is nothing but a function of the brain. Moreover, they learn that every special form of thought is a result of the activity of special portion of the brain. When we see things, or think of seen objects, the optical convolutions of our brain are active. A certain portion of the tympanal lobes are active when we hear, and so on.

Those of the modern scientists who advocate the production of thought by brain say that 'mind is conterminous with brain functions'. If the brain functions stop, the mind, intelligence, consciousness and all the mental phenomena will instantly stop. The phenomena of consciousness correspond to element for element, to the operations of special parts of the brain. There is no such thing as soul ; consequently, there can be no question regarding its existence after death. They deny the existence of the soul altogether. The sensations decay, when the organic conditions change, and stop, when the machinery stops. The brain brings into existence the material of consciousness of which our minds consist. Some explain the process by which thought is produced by the brain, by saying that the peculiar structure of the brain is destined to produce thought and consciousness, just as the stomach is destined to perform the function of digestion and the liver to secrete bile. As food materials, after falling into the stomach, change

and assume new qualities, so the impressions of the brain through the nerves are metamorphosed into the ideas, thought, emotion, will, expressions of the face, speech, disposition, etc. Thus thought or soul is the secretion of the brain, and when the brain is gone, soul cannot exist. Here impressions are compared to food, as if the impressions were gross forms of matter, or as if they could exist apart from a perceiving mind. Buchner, one of the most famous materialists, says :

‘Thinking must be regarded as a special mode of general natural motion’.

J. Luys says :

‘As one sees a metallic rod, placed in a glowing furnace, gradually heats itself and passes successively from the shades of bright red to dark red, to white and develops, as its temperature rises, heat and light, so the living sensitive cells, in presence of the incitations that solicit them, exalt themselves, progressively as to their most interior sensibility’.

Percival Lowell says :

‘When we have, as we say, an idea, what happens inside of us is probably like this : the neural current of molecular change passes up the nerves, and through the ganglia reaches at last the cortical cells * * . When it reaches the cortical cells, it finds a set of molecules which are not so accustomed to this special change. The current encounters resistance, and in overcoming this resistance, it causes the cells to glow. This white-heating of the cells we call consciousness. Consciousness, in short, is probably nerve-glow’.

Thus the Western materialists, who believe that the physical forces are metamorphosed into ideas, thoughts and sensations, describe the process by which this change takes place. Herbert Spencer, being an agnostic, advocates the metamorphosis

of the physical forces into states of consciousness but he does not describe the process. He leaves it as a mystery which it is impossible to fathom. That is, he does not know how this metamorphosis takes place, but he is sure it does take place. Spencer, however, identifies the soul with the brain, and compares it to the piano. He says :

‘Ideas are like the successive chords and cadences brought out, which successively die as the other ones are sounded, and it would be as proper to say that these passing chords and cadences thereafter exists in the piano, as it is proper to say that passing ideas thereafter exist in the brain (soul).’⁷

But here Mr. Spencer forgets that the piano needs a performer to produce musical sounds. Music is never brought out by the piano itself, if it does not exist in the mind of the performer. So, his analogy is imperfect, and incomplete. It would have been complete if he supposed that the individual soul or mind is detached from the brain and plays upon its nervous centres and brain cells as a performer, plays upon the keys of a piano.

Another materialistic thinker, Professor W. K. Clifford, who believes in the combination theory, says :

‘Consciousness is a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of feelings. The action of the brain is also a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of nerve message. For every feeling in consciousness, there is at the same time a nerve message of the brain. Consciousness is not a simple thing, but complex ; it is the combination of feelings into a stream. Inexorable facts connect our consciousness with this body that we know ; and that not merely as a whole, but the parts of it are connected

7. Vide *Principles of Psychology*, VII., p. 485.

severally with parts of our brain action. If there is any similar connection with a spiritual body, it only follows that the spiritual body must die at the same time with the natural one'.

Thus the materialistic thinker, who do not believe in a soul as separate from the brain, or independent of the physical body, try to deduce mind and intelligence from matter, or from the combinations of matter, either by applying the theory of production, or the theory of combination.

In India, similar theories were advanced by the Cārvākas, who did not believe in the existence of a soul as separate from the gross body.⁸ The Buddhists maintained that the body is the cause of mind and intelligence, that consciousness is the result of the combination of insentient matter and unintelligent forces of physical nature. They used the illustration of the inebriating power of liquor arising from a chemical combination of certain ingredients.

But the Vedānta philosophers refuted both these materialistic theories, by pointing out the fallacy of their principal arguments. Vedānta says that the other half is mind, or subject, or soul.⁹ It is impossible to deduce the one from the other. In the first place, if we analyse our knowledge of matter and force, we find that we cannot matter by itself, and we cannot know force by itself; that what we know is nothing but a mental change. Knowledge of matter is nothing but the knowledge of that change of mind of which we are conscious. When we say

8. *Vide Notes.*

9. *Cf. Swāmi Abhedānanda : Self-Knowledge, pp. 17-18.*

that matter exists we are conscious of a peculiar mental change beyond which we cannot know. The mind cannot go beyond itself. Even our knowledge that the soul or mind is a function of the brain, presupposes the existence of another mind or knower. Whenever we say that consciousness or soul is the result of the combination of matter, that statement also requires another mind to be conscious of that idea. John Stuart Mill was right in saying that after dissecting a human brain, when one does not find there any trace of the soul or mind, and denies its existence, or asserts that mind or soul is the function of the brain, he forgets that such knowledge necessarily implies the existence of his mind or soul. As the knowledge of matter, or brain, or any other kind of knowledge depends upon the self-consciousness, it will be absurd to deny the priority of that which is the basis consciousness, of intelligence, and of all knowledge, and with the help of which one can know the existence of matter, or its combinations. G. J. Romanes says :

‘We cannot think any of the facts of external nature without pre-supposing the existence of a mind which thinks them, and, therefore, so far at least as we are concerned, mind is necessarily prior to everything else. It is for us the only mode of existence which is real in its own right, and to it, as to a standard, all other modes of existence which may be inferred must be referred. Therefore, if we say that mind is a function of motion, we are only saying, in somewhat confused terminology, that mind is a function of itself. Such then, I take to be a general refutation of materialism’.¹⁰

If it be a scientific truth that motion produces nothing

10. Vide Romanes : *Mind and Motion and Monism*, p. 21.

but motion, as it has been established by modern science, how can we maintain that the molecular motion of the brain cells produces consciousness, or intelligence, which is not the same as motion, but is a knower of motion ? Therefore, Vedanta philosophy teaches that the source of consciousness cannot be found in matter, but stands independent of it. What we call matter, is only the medium thought which consciousness manifests itself.

Dr. Schiller, an eminent thinker of the West, holding similar opinions, says :

‘Matter is not that which produces consciousness, but that which limits it, and confines its intensity within certain limits ; material organization does not construct consciousness out of arrangements of atoms, but contracts its manifestation within the sphere which it permits’.

There are other agnostic thinkers who say :

‘The conception of a soul as a substantive thing is a mere figment of imagination’.

Kant said :

‘There is no means whatever by which we can learn anything respecting the constitution of the soul so far as regards the possibility of its separate existence.’

David Hume, like some of the Buddhist philosophers in India, believed that the human soul is nothing but a bundle of impressions and ideas. Hume said :

‘When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long I am insensible of myself and may be truly said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate, after the dissolution of my body.

I should be entirely annihilated ; nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect nonentity’.

So, according to Hume, our souls die every night when we sleep soundly. I think very few of us will be ready to accept such an explanation of the nature of the human soul.

Those, who depend on sense perceptions only, try to see the soul by dissecting the brain, but when the senses do not reveal it, they deny its existence. They may just as well try to find the soul in the heart or stomach, as the ancient seekers of the soul did. If we examine properly, we shall be able to see logical fallacies and inconsistencies in all the materialistic and agnostic arguments which support the theory that soul is the result of body or of the combination of matter, or else that the soul does not exist at all. From ancient times, such materialistic conclusions have been repeatedly arrived at by thinkers of different countries. But do our minds remain satisfied with such ideas, and do we stop from asking again and again—is there any life after death ? If we hear millions of times ‘there is no soul’, still we cannot be entirely convinced that we shall cease to exist after death ; we cannot think of our annihilation ; we cannot believe that our individuality will be lost forever. Such solutions do not appeal to our reason ; they do not satisfy our minds, nor do they bring any consolation to our souls. These statements are but that which exists eternally. If existence be a truth today, it must be true eternally.

If we deny the existence of a soul as independent of the body, we cannot explain many facts

which often occur during our lifetime, nor the genuine phenomena described in the reports of the Psychical Research Society of Europe and America. We cannot ignore the facts agnostics who have seen their *doubles* outside of themselves, when alone in their rooms reposing on a couch or an easy chair. There are instances of such doubles talking walking or doing various other things. How are these facts to be explained ? There are many descriptions of the manifestation of the doubles of the Yogis in India. Various attempts have been made to explain such events by asserting that they are either optical delusions or hallucinations of the brain. But we cannot say they are optical delusions or hallucinations, if they can stand the test of verification. There are many properly verified instances of the appearance of the double. Suppose at night before retiring one is sitting alone in his room, after locking the door from inside. Suppose his mind is greatly disturbed with some important business question or a mathematical problem. He suddenly sees another exactly like himself, sitting at his desk, with a pen in his hand, writing something on a piece of paper, and, after examination, he finds that it is an answer to his question or the correct solution of the problem which has puzzled him for many days ; what explanation will you offer ? What kind of hallucination is this ? What verification stronger and more satisfactory than this do you want to have ? Such an occurrence cannot be explained by clairvoyance or telepathy. Some may say it is a false story, but mere assertion does not disprove the facts. The

denial of a fact does not change the nature of the fact. Facts are facts whether we admit or deny them, whether our current theory, can explain them or not. Clairvoyance, telepathy, and thought transference have failed to explain these cases. Such facts can only be explained by the theory of existence of the soul, as separable from the body. According to science, that theory is true which can explain most facts and we should accept it, until a better theory or a better explanation comes. Those who believe in the theory of production, or that of combination, will shut their eyes to such facts. But those who believe in the transmission theory, or, in other words, those who hold that brain of human body, is the instrument, through which the soul manifests its powers, will find no difficulty in explaining all the genuine phenomena connected with the 'double'.

'The transmission theory also puts itself in touch with a whole class of experiences that are which difficulty explained by the production theory'.

Again, there are authentic instances of persons appearing to friends immediately after death.¹¹ There are many such instances in India, in Europe, and in every country. Such instances may occur, where the persons, appearing to friends ask to have their children taken care of, or bring some message. One need not go to spiritualistic seances to experience

11. "***it might be possible for this departing soul to manifest itself to its friends, either in the immediate vicinity, or even at a distance, * * * manifestations of the departing spirit, at the moment of death, are by no means uncommon, but are, on the contrary, very numerous.'—Carrington & Meader : *Death, Its Causes and Phenomena*, p. 382. Vide C : *Flammarion : The Unknown*, pp. 100, 108, 169-172. Cf : also the argument put forward against

these things. Many such experience have come to persons in private life and in their own homes ; and they have been well verified.

In spiritualistic seances, ninety-nine cases, out of one hundred of spirit manifestation, are mixed with fraud, and many professional mediums have been most pitifully exposed both here and abroad. The motive power in professional mediums to make money, or to earn a living.

In India, the Hindus do not trust in professional mediums. On the contrary, they say it is wicked to hold public seances for money. It is more wicked to earn a living at the expense of the poor spirits. Why do you try to earn your living, by making the the poor spirits appear to you ? Those persons, who who do this, are considered ordinary fakirs. Although many mediums have been exposed, and many spirit manifestations have been proved to be like magic or jugglery, still those fraudulent cases cannot be the reason for denying the existence of the soul as apart from the body or in a life after death. Now, the question may arise : If the soul exists after death, does it retain its individuality ? The Vedanta philosophy says, yes, it does. The souls of earth-bound spirits retain their personality too. Some of the Western writers, who have known very little of Hindu philosophy, say that the highest ideal of the Hindu religion is the annihilation of the soul. These childish statements prove their ignorance and prejudice. We here such things from writers

the atheistic theory denying the existence of soul apart from the body and after death in the *Pali Pysai Suttanta*, Digha Nikāya, Vol. II.

who consider themselves great scholars after reading the description of Hindu religion given by the Christian missionaries, who do not see good in any religion except their own, who write simply to serve their own purposes. In the voluminous writings of the Hindus, however, you will never find a single sentence which teaches that the soul will be destroyed after death. On the contrary, you will read that the soul is eternal, immortal, deathless and birthless. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* it is said :

'The soul of man is indestructible ; it cannot be pierced by sword ; fire cannot burn it ; air cannot dry it ; water cannot moisten it.'¹²

'If the slayer think that he has slain, or if the slain think that he is slain, both of them know not that the soul can neither slay nor be slain'.¹³

Ralph Waldo Emerson, after reading the *Bhagavad-Gita*, rendered this passage in verse in his poem entitled *Brahm* :

*If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.*¹⁴

As regards the retaining of the individuality,

12. नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मास्तः ॥
अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थानूरचलोऽयं सनातनः ॥

—*Bhagavad-Gītā*, II. 23.24

13. य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

—*Bhagavad-Gītā*, II. 19

14. Vide Notes.

Vedanta says that each soul after death takes with it all the experiences, impressions, and ideas which it gained on earth ; it takes its mind, its intelligence, its intellect and powers of the sense and enjoy, or peaps, the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds.

If you read the funeral service of the Hindus, you will find that after the death of a person the relatives do good in the name of the departed; believing that good thoughts, prayers and good workers, done in their names, will help the departed spirits. The Hindus also believe that, if we think of them constantly and invoke them, asking them to remain with us for our own gratification without of their good, we force them to remain confined to that particular personality, which was connected with their earthly bodies they behind them. Personality is always connected with the body.

At every birth of the body, we have a certain personality, according to the environments, and if we keep one soul confined in one personality or one set of environments, there will be no progress of the soul on higher planes. Therefore, it is better not to drag our departed friends to our plane of existence, but to keep to help them by sending good thoughts to them.

The most ancient writers of the Vedic ages show that they believed in the spirit world of the Pitars, or father, where the parted souls go after death.¹⁵ The

15. प्रेहि प्रेहि पथिभिः पूर्व्यभिर्यत्रा नः पूर्वे पितरः परेयुः ।

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सं गच्छस्व पितृभिः सत्येमेनेष्टापूर्तेन परमे व्योमन् ।

—Rig, Veda, X.7-8

king, or ruler, of this place is called Yama. He was the first of the mortals to enter that world, and he became the ruler of those who came latter.

The Hindus believe in a heaven, but not in any hell. The Hindu heaven is different from that of the Christian or of the Mohammedan. The Hindus believe that heaven is a realm, where the depart souls go to reap the pleasant effects of their good and virtuous actions, that they remain there for some time, that is, until the results of their good works are completely reaped ; then after that period, they will return to this world again.¹⁶ The Christians, Mohammedans, and Zoroastrians believe in a heaven of all kinds of sense enjoyments, where pleasures will come incessantly without troubles or any sort of pain. This, according to the Hindus, is not a desirable state. They say that all these celestial enjoyments are phenomenal and transitory. Supposing a spirit remains in heaven and enjoy for a million years or for one cycle ; still, compared to eternity, this is a very short time. So they say that, after enjoying the results of good works in those realms, one is bound to be born again, either here or in some other planet, according to one's tendencies and capacities. Therefore, in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* it is said :

'All the different worlds of spiritis beginning with the highest heavens, are state from where one must return'.¹⁷

16. ते तं भ्रक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति ।

एवं त्रैयोधर्म्यमनुप्रपन्ना गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ॥

—*Bhagavad-Gītā*. IX. 21

17. अन्नहमुबनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

—*Bhagavad-Gītā*. VIII. 16

Because they are within the realm of the phenomena and are changeable. But he who attains to the realization of Truth, transcends all phenomena and laws which govern them.

The Persians believed that the soul would rise three days after death and would go either to heaven or to hell, according to its thoughts, speech and works. This Persian idea of heaven was afterwards adopted by the Jews and the Christians. The ancient Hebrews did not trouble themselves about the life after death. They believed that God breathed life into man's nostrils and that the breath, which came from Jehovah, would go back to Him ; that the life-breath of all creatures would return to source from whence it came. 'That which happens to man also happens to lower animals'. This life breath was sometimes called *Nephesh*, *Ruach*, or *Neshama*.

The Egyptians believed in a 'double', which was like a shadow of the body, and which remained as long as the body remained. This gave rise to the idea of mummifying the bodies of the dead. If the body was injured in any part, the double, or soul, was likewise injured ; so to keep the soul intact they preserved the bodies.

The Chaldeans believed in a 'double', which would be annihilated, if the body were destroyed. They expected a resurrection of the corpse.¹⁸ Many of the Christians have a similar belief. This idea gave rise to the custom of embalming and burying the dead. Some of the Christians still believe that the body will rise after death. Others do not believe

18. Vide Notes.

in the resurrection of the body. The believe that the soul will remain and exist through all enernity, although it had a beginning. The Christian idea, regarding the beginning of the soul, is that, at the time of birth, each soul is newly created by the almighty God. But the Hindus say that which has a beginning, cannot live through all eternity ; it must have an end. The Hindus do not believe that the soul is created by God, or by any other being. It is eternal by its nature. It is birthless, and it cannot die. The Hindus do not mean destruction or annihilation by death.¹⁹ They mean by it a change of body or form. This kind of death is a constant attendant of life. Phenomenal life is impossible without death or change of forms. We are dying every day. Every seventh year the entire body has changed every particle and renewed every atom. Prof. Huxley says :

'Physiology writes over the portals of life, *Debmur morti nos nostraque*, with a profounder meaning than the Roman poet ascribed to the melancholy line. And in whatever guise it takes refuge, whether fungus or oak, worm or man, the living protoplasm not only utlimately dies and is resolved into its mineral and lifeless constituents, but is always dying, and, strange as the paradox may sound, could not live unless it died'.

Although every particle of the body changes, we still continue to exist ; our continuity is not broken From

19. न जायते न्नियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वाऽभविता वा न भूयः ।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

—*Bhagavad-Gītā*, II. 20

Vide also Katha-Upanisad, 1.2.18

babyhood to old age we retain the same sense of 'I' and of personal identity. This continuity of the conscious agent, or 'I', cannot be explained by any physical or chemical law. According to Vedanta philosophy, thought or feeling or intelligence can never be produced by any mechanical or molecular motion. 'Motion produces motion and nothing else', says modern science. As such, how can the motion of the atoms of the body produce consciousness? That must be due to some higher power, or force. This force is ordinarily called *soul*. The soul is not subject to the atomic or molecular changes in the body; it is rather the cause of them. It is beyond all change, and consequently, beyond death. It is the basis of continuity of the conscious state and of the sense of identity in the individual. As we survive and retain our individuality after each seven years of change and renewal, so we shall live as individual souls after the final dissolution of the form of our bodies. In the *Bhagavad Gītā* it is said :

'As during our lifetime we survive the death of the baby body, the young body, and the mature body, successively and retain our individuality, so after the death of the old body we shall survive, live, retain our individuality and continue to exist through eternity'.²⁰

20. देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिधीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

—*Bhagavad-Gītā*. II. 13

CHAPTER THREE

SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF DEATH

The *Mahābhārata* on death—The mystery of death is not solved by mythology—Different scriptures—The Genesis—Adam and Satan—Scientific reseraches—Deaths of the conscious life and the cellular life—Prof. Charles Minot—Causes and signs of death—Trance, catalepsy and ecstasy—The old Banylonian method of embalming the body—The cremation method—The belief of the Egyptians—Mind as a factor in the case of death—Dr. John Hunter—Tourtelle, the French physician—Extreme anger generates poison—Grief produces a havoc—*Prāna* the leforce—Mind and the *Prāna*—Mind is the creator—Who is the conductor of the organs—*Ectoplasm*—Materializing mediums—Soul at the time of death—C. Flammarion—What is materialization—Subtle body—Body the instrument—Death is no longer mysterious—Nothing is destroyed—There is something unchangeable in the midst of changes.

In this age of commerzialism and materialism, few people think about death. They are rather afraid of it. They do not care to think what will happen after death either. They would rather live in this world, enjoy all the pleasures of life, make the best use of everything, and make a will, insure their life, or save a little money to pay the funeral expenses, and go on living. Out of the two thousand millions of people who inhabit this little planet, earth, forty millions of human bodies, are disposed of every year, and a million tons of human flesh, bones and blood are allowed to return to their elementary states. During the last war in Europe, many millions of people were killed and were destroyed. Some of them were blown into atoms. But we do not think of that horrible scene. We have almost forgotten it. So we do not think for a moment that we shall die.

We do not living and doing the same things as we did before. Our interest is not in solving the problem of death, although it is the greatest mystery in the world. It is as mysterious as the coming of life on this plane. But still we do not think much about it. Even the Christian churches do not take such a lively interest in this problem of death today, as they did in the last century. They would rather busy themselves with questions—social, educational, and especially political problems of the day. The medicine-men of this age do not solve the problem of death, although hundreds are dying in their hands every year. They gather all the things that they can, and their ideal is to enjoy the pleasures of life, to make the best of their opportunity.

In the *Mahābhārata*, the most ancient epic of the Hindus, we read a prize question that was asked to different great men of ancient times ? ‘What is the most wonderful thing in the world ?’ Various answers were given, but they were not satisfactory. The answer which Yudhisthira gave was accepted, and his answer was this :

‘Every day, and day after day, animals and human beings are passing out of life, but we do not think of death ; we think that we shall never die. What can be more wonderful than this ?’¹

This answer was given nearly thirty-five centuries ago, but the same truth prevails today. We do not think of death, although we see every day dead bodies carried to the grave right under our eyes.

1. अह्न्याहनि भूतानि गच्छन्ति यममन्दिरम् ।
शेषास्थिरत्वमिच्छन्ति किमाश्चर्यमतःपरम् ॥” —महाभारत

The mystery of death is not solved by mythology or mythological beliefs of ancient peoples which have been handed down to us through generations. The scriptures of the Jews, the Christians, the Parsees, and the Mohammedans do not explain what death is. But in some of these scriptures, we find that God commanded the first man to do certain things, not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge ; but when the first man did eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the Lord cursed him, and His curse brought death in this world. We read in the Genesis, the Lord commanded :

'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'.²

Of course, Adam did not die in the day, when he was tempted and when he ate the fruit thereof, but he reaped the consequences afterwards, and died later. This passage shows that at first God did not intend that man should die, but the death came to the world through the evil influence of Satan, the devil. It was Satan who brought death into this world. In fact, the curse was the cause, but the curse was brought about by the evil influence of the devil. Those who believe in this, that death was caused or brought about by Satan, do not care to think further about it. They leave this question as settled, and naturally they do other things and do not try to solve the problem. They think that, if it be the curse of God, it is an inevitable end of life, let us be satisfied with it.

2. Vide Chapter 11, 16 and 17.

Scientific researches, however, toward tracing the causes of death have brought out many truths and many laws which were unknown to the writers of the Genesis and other scriptures of different nations. The orthodox science, or the materialistic science, as it is known to us, which denies the existence of the soul as an entity and also denies the existence of mind, or life or intelligence, as distinct from the results of matter and material particles, governed by physical forces and chemical actions, says that death is nothing but the cessation of life,—an inevitable end which all beings come to. The scientists do not explain it elaborately, because they do not know much about it. Still they try to explain that when the vital parts of the body wear out in this machine, then naturally the whole of the machine must stop. The vital parts are regarded as the heart, the lungs and the brain. When any of these vital centres is worn out or injured by disease or accident, then naturally the whole machinery of the body stops.

But here a question may arise : ‘Does the death of the conscious life imply the death of the life of the organs ?’ That is a very difficult question to answer. Or, in other words, when a person is dead, does it mean that the organs are dead also ? On the contrary, science tells us that the organs do not die immediately after the death of the body or the conscious life. For instance, if a chicken’s head be cut off and its heart taken out and watched, it will continue to live for a long time, after the death of the chicken. In fact, in the Rockefeller Institute, there is a heart of a chicken that has been kept for eight

years, and it is still going and doing normal action. That shows that the organs have their independent life, which may continue to live even after the conscious life of the individual is dead. In the same manner, it can be shown that the cells and tissues have their own life. They do not die, but they live for a long time after the death of the conscious life. Modern science tells us that there are two kinds of death : one is the death of the conscious life, and the other is the death of the organic and the cellular life, which is called 'somatic life.' One does not depend upon the other. In fact, the life continues to exist, depending upon the natural process of the vital force which is known as life-force. But this materialistic science does not explain how it is that the organs, the cells and tissues continue to live ; because it denies the existence of a vital energy or vital force as distinct from all other known forces of nature. On the other hand, it considers that this vital force is a result of the chemical actions of the atoms and molecules of the organism, and, therefore, it cannot explain any further.

Professor Charles Minot of Harvard Medical School writes in his book, entitled : *Old Age Growth and Death* :

'Differentiation leads, as its inevitable conclusion, to death. Death is the price we are compelled to pay for our organization, and also for the differentiation which exists in us. Death of the whole comes, as we now know, whenever some essential part of the body gives way. Sometimes one, sometimes another, perhaps the brain, perhaps the heart, perhaps, one of the other internal organs, may be the first, in which the change of cytomorphosis goes so far that it

can no longer perform its share of work, and failing, brings about the failure of the whole'.

This is the scientific view of death. It leaves death with its mystery and all its sacredness. We are not in the least able, at the present time, to say what life is ; still less, perhaps, what death is.

Thus by studying the materialistic science, we do not gain a very clear idea of what death really means. But science goes on trying to trace the causes of death and describes the signs of death. Science tells us that the actual signs of death are very difficult to find. The so-called popular signs of death, like the stoppage of the heart-beat and pulse or respiration are not the actual signs of death, because there have been hundreds of cases, where the heart-beat is stopped and the respiration is stopped and yet after sometime they were received. The heart-beat might stop for many hours, even for days, and then it can be revived. Respiration might stop for a long time. In fact, science has recorded many cases of suspended animation, where the respiration of the hear-beat is stopped for forty-eight hours in the least. But there have been other cases, where men have been buried alive in a hermetically sealed box for forty days, and afterwards they were taken out and revived. They lived, married and enjoyed all the blessings of life afterwards. It is very difficult to say which would be the proper or final sign of death. Science tells us that the decomposition and putrefaction are the only final signs of death and nothing else, and that shows that people might be buried prematurely. There have been many cases of premature burial,

recorded in the medical journals of the world every year. And for that reason, some of the countries in Europe have passed a law that no one should be buried immediately after death, until decomposition sets in. Because it is a very serious thing to bury living beings. There have been cases of many prematurely killed, by putting them into the coffin and burying them under the ground.

As premature burial is objectionable, so premature embalming is objectionable. Embalmers have killed many before they really died. They might have been revived and might have lived for a long time. Because it is a proved fact today that when the person is considered as dead, he might be in a trance, or in a state of catalepsy, or in a state of ecstasy.

Trance, catalepsy and ecstasy are conditions which resemble death. The outward signs are similar. But what happens to the soul after trance or ecstasy ? Science does not know, because it denies the existence of a soul. A person might go into a state of trance and remain in the state for hours. There are persons who can stop the heart-beat by their will. I know a Hindu Yogi, who came to America a few years ago, and who, in New York, went through all the medical tests to prove that he could stop his heart-beat at his will. The medical practitioners were all dumbfounded and questioned how he could do it. It is possible, because it obeys the will of the individual. The individual will commands and directs the organic functions. But materialistic science cannot explain how it is

possible, through the known laws that are accepted by these scientific thinkers.

The old Babylonian method of embalming the body³ and burning the death, which has been handed down to us from pre-Christian era and which is practised today in all the civilized countries, is based upon the superstitious belief that the body will eventually rise and go to heaven. But after the decomposition sets in and the body is gone, what will rise ? Science shows that it is an absolute impossibility for the body to rise or go to heaven. Still some people cling to that old belief and think that their friends and relatives will eventually arise and go to heavens with their physical bodies. But the best method of disposing of the dead body is the method of cremation, because it is sanitary. It is the best method from the standpoint of health as well as from the standpoint of safety for the living beings. Why should we have so many dead bodies going through the process of decomposition around us ? It is better to get rid of them and let them go to their elementary conditions. This cremation has been practised in India from very ancient times. In the Vedas, we find that cremation was regard as the best method.⁴ But among other nations, burial or mummification was regard as the best method. As I have already said that their idea was to keep the body intact for a long time, because the soul will eventually come back to the body. The Egyptians also had that kind of belief. They believed that if the physical body

3. Vide Notes.

4. Vide Notes.

were kept intact and not mutilated, then the soul would eventually come back to dwell in that body ; whereas if any part of the physical body was mutilated, that part of the double or soul would also be mutilated. They believed in a double,—a 'double' exactly of the same shape and same form as the physical body. In India, we find that the Hindus have a belief in the existence of a double, but it was not dependent upon the gross physical body. They have a philosophy altogether different from that of the Egyptians and other nations of ancient times. They believe that this 'double' might have the body and continue to live even when this gross physical body is destroyed through the process of cremation which they even now regard as the most sanitary method of disposing of the dead body.

There is another class of scientific thinkers who are a little more advanced than the orthodox scientists. They hold that mind is a factor in the cases of disease and death. They do not deny the existence of mind or intelligence or consciousness, nor do they believe that the mind, intelligence and consciousness are the results of chemical actions of atoms and molecules of the organism. On the contrary, they hold the belief that the source of consciousness and mind are indestructible. So is also life. Life is indestructible. They regard that life-force (*prāna*) is not the result of chemical actions. It is not the same as electricity or any other force that is known to the orthodox science, but it is distinct and separate. They give the cases where mind can bring death through extreme emotions. Some of the functions

of the mind, which we call passions, will create disease and death.

Dr. John Hunter, a noted psychologist, was a genius of extraordinary nature. He was a scientist, but he believed in the power of the mind, and yet he had very little control over his passions. He could not control anger. Once he had extreme anger as the result of a slight provocation, and through the extreme anger, he instantly fell dead. There is a historical record that anger kills the person instantly. The French physician, Tourtelle, witnessed two women who died of extreme anger. Extreme will produce the stoppage of the heart-action and poison the whole system. As extreme anger will kill persons, a slight expression of anger, anger of a milder form, will bring diseases of the worst kind. In fact, when a mother nurses the baby while she is in that state of anger, she feeds the baby with poison, and that poison works and creates all kinds of trouble in the baby's system. It is a scientific fact today.

As anger is dangerous and is a destructive force that creates a havoc in the system, so is fear. Now, the ordinary expression that we are frightened to death has some meaning. Extreme fear will bring death, will stop the heart-action, and will stop the lungs and simultaneously other organs too. Then there are passions, hatred and grief. Grief will produce a havoc in the system. These are all recorded facts. When there have been cases of disease and death through extreme hatred and grief, how can we deny the power of the mind? If mind and mental states can produce such effects upon the physical

body and bring premature death, how can we deny the existence of mind as the most powerful thing that we possess ? Therefore, the scientists, who are advanced thinkers and not bigoted like the orthodox materialists, regard mind as the most wonderful force that is working through this physical body.

There are cases of counterfeits of death, even in the lower animals. There are some of the insects which would feign death. The fox, when he is pursued by an enemy and when he does not know how to escape, lies flat on the ground and feigns death and remains in that state for some time. There are other animals which would even become stiff and the *rigor mortis* of death will be perceptible in the physical body of the animal. It can be produced by the mind. This counterfeit of death may be caused by different things, such as intoxication, apoplexy, heart-trouble and so on. Thus it shows that mind can produce these things under those conditions—the signs of death, and, therefore, those advanced thinkers and scientists consider that death can be brought about by the power of the mind. They regard that this ordinary state, which we call death, is caused by that self-conscious living force, which is working through the organs, and when that self-conscious living force is detached, it produces death. In fact, the self-conscious living soul has vital energy or life-force (*prāna*) and mind with it. Mind is inseparable from the life-force or vital energy. But mind cannot work unless it has an instrument. Therefore, it manufactures the instrument of the

physical body. It draws from the surrounding environments like atoms, molecules or particles of matter, and charges them with the life-force or vibrations of the *prāna* ; and when the vibrations of life-force are weak and are not up to the standard of the conditions of life, then the living soul or the self-conscious mind tries to raise those vibrations of the cellular up to the standard by making all efforts, and if it fails to raise the standard of vibration of the cells and tissues, then there is the death of the whole. Then whole machinery dies.

Thus we see that there are two principal factors in the body : the one is mind and the other is the vibration of *prāna* or the vibratory state of cells and tissues of the body ; but the vibratory state of the cells and tissues is governed by the mind. In fact, mind is the creator, the manipulator and the organizer. It is the director of all the organic functions. The organs might go on vibrating in their own way, but that would not be standard of life. There must be co-ordination. The heart-action must correspond in a certain way with the action of the lungs, and all the intricate mechanism must be adjusted in such a way that one helps the other. Otherwise, there would be no life. If one screw is loose anywhere, the screw must be tightened, otherwise the machine would not work, Now, who tightens this screw ? It is individual self-conscious life-force, which is called, in ordinary terms, the living soul. Living soul means the self-conscious individualized life-force with the sense of 'I' ; and that sense of 'I' holds them together. This sense of 'I' holds all

together, unifies them, and makes the separate parts vibrate and produce a perfect harmony. That harmony is life. As in an orchestra, there might be a hundred instruments, and if each instrument goes on playing in its own way without following the direction of its conductor, it will produce no harmony, similiary, if the organs of the body go on beating in their own way, without producing any harmony, without having any co-ordination, without being directed by their conductor, then it is useless. Who is the conductor of the organs ? Who is the director ? The orthodox science does not see that director, but this advanced science tells us that there is a director, and this director has the absolute control over the whole organism. He is the living soul. At the time of death, he disconnects himself from the organs and leaves the body.

In case of trance, catalepsy and ecstasy, this living soul leaves the body, but the connection is not entirely cut off. There still remains some kind of connection. It is like the umbilical cord of a newborn babe which holds this entity as connected with the physical body. Therefore the physical body can be revived. But when the connection is entirely cut off, the body cannot be revived. Then it is called death. That is the difference. This difference very few people understand.

But this living soul, which goes out of the body at the time of death, can be photographed. The most delicate and sensitive instruments have been used to weight the body just before death and immediately after death, and making all allowances for the gases

that escape, it has been found that the substance which passes out of the body at the time of death, has a definite weight of about half an ounce or three-quarters of an ounce.

This fine substance that emanates from the body at the time of death, has a luminosity and this luminous substance is photographed, and can be seen by the psychic as passing out of the body. The whole body becomes enshrouded with a kind of luminous mist. I remember the case of a girl, whose brother died in Los Angeles, some years ago. I heard it from her mother. At the deathbed of her brother, the young girl said : 'Mamma, mamma, see, there is a mist around his body ; what is it ?' But the mother could not see it. She said that it came out of the body. Scientists have taken up that subject in Europe and are experimenting on this emanation. They call it *ectoplasm*. It is a vapourlike substance, and it has no particular form. It is like a cloud, and it can take a shape or a form, and can be photographed. What substance it is, they do not know ; but they cannot deny its existence.

Our human bodies are emanating that substance all the time. It can be seen especially at the time, when there is a medium in a trance-like condition. The materializing mediums emanate that very strongly. I have seen it in private seances, when there was no professional medium at all. I have handled it and touched it. There is no particular feeling, when we feel *ectoplasm*. It cannot be described. But when it takes a definite shape, it becomes almost like solid, like of our own body. It can take any form.

At the time of death, all these vital forces that are governing the different organs, become concentrated and centralized into one point before it leaves the body, and that we find the dying person's sight becomes dim, and the sensations of the body become faint, and gradually the whole body is going through a transformation. And, in this transformation, there are cases, where the psychic power of the individual manifest. Some of the dying persons develop clairvoyance and clairaudience. They can appear just at the time of death, either before or immediately after, to distant friends in the form of an apparition, and they can give their messages. Such cases have been recorded by the scientists. The French Astronomer, Camille Flammarion had written a book, *The Unknown* on that subject, by gathering all the authentic reports, made under the test conditions in different families, which describe the experience of different people immediately at the time of death or after death. Fifteen hundred such records were gathered, and afterwards he selected quite a few out of them, which were absolutely authentic, and published them in his book. Now, these records show that there is something which is not the result of the physical body. This *ectoplasm* is a substance, which contains finer matter in vibration, and this finer matter forms the under-garment of the soul, and the gross physical body is the outer garment. So we have two bodies : the gross physical body and the finer or etherial body, which exist in each one of us. We may not feel it at present, because our sight and senses are looking for the gross, material, and

tangible objects. But it does not become tangible until it is brought down to the plans of our senses. The plane of our senses depends upon a certain degree of vibration. We can see light, when the vibration of light is within the range of our vision. From red to violet our eyes can see, but if there be less vibrations than the red, we do not see it. In order to become visible, it must vibrate in a certain way, so that our organs might catch it, just as sound. Thus there are sounds which we do not hear at all, because our organ of hearing is imperfect. Similarly the etherial body cannot be seen, until it is brought within the range of our vision, by a process known as materilization. It is a process which brings the fine matter, which is vibrating at a high rate or into a lower rate of vibration, so that we can catch it or get a glimpse of it.

The Vedānta philosophy is in perfect harmony with the conclusions of this latter kind of advanced scientists, who hold that mind and the living soul are distinct factors in creating disease, in bringing on death and in manufacturing the physical body. These ideas we find in the Vedānta philosophy, which is the oldest system of philosophy in the world. The truth never grows old. The truth that was discovered five thousand years ago, is the same truth today, even if it be re-discovered by the modern scientists. So we must remember that truth is one. There is only one condition which can be absolutely true. The other are imitations of truth . That absolute truth might have been discovered ages before, but because of the lapse of time, the truth does not change. It is the

eternal truth. Therefore we find that this finer body, which I have just described, is called in Vedānta the 'subtle body' (*sukṣma-sarīram*), which is the under-garments of the soul, and the gross physical is the outer garment. When the soul has performed certain functions and enjoyed certain pleasure and fulfilled certain desires, it finds that this gross physical body is no longer of any use and it does not work right. Then the living soul leaves the gross body and manufactures another. Just as you have run a motor-machine for two years, and after two years, you find that the parts are worn-out and that it has done its service, then you leave it and get another. That is exactly what the living soul does. You cannot blame the soul for doing that. Because the body is the instrument, through which, the soul must manifest its powers, gain experiences and earn lessons and gather knowledge. In this way, the living soul is progressing in the process of evolution, rising from a lower to a higher state, and fulfilling its mission at every step of manifestation.,

This idea of life will explain the mystery of death. Death is no longer mysterious, when we know that there is an entity which has manufactured this instrument, which is dwelling in it and which leaves it when the time comes. So death does not mean the annihilation of anything, or destruction, or reduction into nothingness of anything, but it means disintegration. It means that the instrument which has served its purpose, must be thrown away, and another instrument must be rebuilt out of the same material. Who can tell that the atoms and molecules

which made up the body of Cleopatra thousands of years ago, are not used in the bodies of living beings today ? The same atoms and molecules that are buried in the dead bodies, have been dissolved and taken up by the vegetable life and have reappeared in the forms of plants cereals, and we might be eating them and taking them in again, and they are forming parts of our own body. So, it is a revolution. Nothing is destroyed. The atoms and molecules go into one body, get out, and enter into another body. In this continuous process of life, its manifestations of evolution and involution, are going on, and the living soul is the master of it. That living soul has no death. Science tells us that which has existed once, will continue to exist for ever. But the physical form of the body will go. It has no existence and it is constantly changing. The form, that you had when you were a little body, is gone. The form that you had yesterday, you have not got today. The form that you have this minute, you will not have it next minute. It is a continuous influx and reflux of matter. It is just like a whirlpool. The particles of matter are revolving and keeping up the shape according to the type that you have manufactured, so that there would be an identity.

Now, in this vortex of the particles of matter, which are constantly in motion, there is something that is constant and unchangeable within us. That is our consciousness. If you ever see your own hand or any part of the body through X-ray, you will find like a revelation that your body consists of finer

particles of mist-like matter, which are hanging the outline of the bones. The gross physical body, which appears as solid, is not at all solid. It is just like a cloud, and we think it is solid only under certain conditions. At the time of death, the soul leaves this material plane and enters into another plane of consciousness, which may be called another dimension. We are now living in three dimensions. There is another dimension, where the sense-objects do not exist at all. It is beyond the limitations of our physical body. Even the motion of the earth and of the planetary system do not exist there. We cannot imagine such a state, unless we get a glimpse of that other dimension. It is called the fourth dimension.⁵ Where does the human soul go ? It does not go anywhere after death. It remains in the fourth dimension and cuts off all connections with the physical world of three dimensions. The third and fourth dimensions are related to each other, just like a wheel within a wheel. We know through the study of science that the cells of the body are constantly moving. But do we feel that motion ? When we sit still, we are enjoying the quiet. But there is a constant motion going on within our system, which we are not conscious of. So the departed soul is not conscious of the changes and conditions of the gross physical body.

So, our bodies are nothing but the instruments or garments of the soul. Vedānta tells us that when a person dies, he is not really dead, but

5. Some imagine five to seven dimensions. Dimensions are known as the layers of thought or mind.

death means a change,—a change from one state of consciousness to another state of consciousness, and the soul throws away the gross physical body at the time of death, just as we throw away our old worn-out garments. This idea is beautifully expressed in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* :

‘As ye throw away our old worn-out garments and put on new ones, so the living soul, after using the body which is the gross physical garment, throws it away when it is worn-out, and manufactures a new one.’⁶

6. वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
 नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
 तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णां
 न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

—Bhagavad-gītā, II. 22.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOUL AFTER DEATH

Different views about death and soul—*Katha Upanishad*—The Vedas—*Brahmaloka*—Law of *Karma*—*Pitryāna*—*Devayāna*—The heavens—Higher conception of Vedānta—Zend Avesta on Spiritualism—Old and New Testaments—The Persians—The Egyptians—The Chaldeans—Pythagoras and Plato—What did Plato believe—Vedānta on transmigration—Power exists in nature—The views of the so-called scientists—Race or species—Evolution—Soul is immortal—Vedānta cares not for heaven or hell.

The question what becomes of the human soul after death, is as old as the first appearance of man on the earth. Almost all nations and tribes of all climes and ages have asked the question amongst themselves and tried to solve the problem each according to its power, capacity, understanding and knowledge. Some tried to explain it through peculiar theories and beliefs ; some through mythology, or poetry, and others through proper reasoning and scientific and logical demonstration. These various attempts of different thinkers, to solve that ancient problem, have ended in different conclusions which satisfy more or less the minds of various people in different countries. All the religions of the world are built upon the solution of this great puzzle. All the philosophies, ancient or modern, and even the science of today, have spared no pains to unriddle that enigma of existence. Many have failed, and many have stopped after deep investigations and researches without finding and satisfactory explanation, and have at last cried out in despair : It is beyond our knowledge; it is beyond the reach of human understanding. Some have be-

come agnostics and others have denied the existence of any such thing as soul. Some said that the soul of man exists as long as the body and the combination of matter which produces the soul, exists. When the body dies, the soul is also dead and gone. Some have arrived at the conclusion that there is no such thing as an individuality. It is like the flame of a lamp.¹ When there is no lamp, there is no light; similarly when there is no body, there is no soul left. Everything ends with the death of the body. No sign of individuality is left after the dissolution of the physical form or the gross body. But after hearing all these various conclusions, does our mind stop to ask the same question within ourselves again and again? No. Because each individual needs an explanation which will satisfy the innate longing for immortal or deathless life, with which each one of us is born. If we hear millions of times that there is no soul, still we cannot be convinced entirely that we shall cease to exist after death. We cannot think of such a state; we cannot believe that our individuality will be lost after death. Such solutions do not appeal to our reason and do not satisfy our mind, nor do they bring to us consolation of any kind. In the *Katha-Upanishad*, we find that Yama, the ruler of the departed and god of death, says :

'Fool dwelling in the darkness of ignorance, self-conceited with vain knowledge and puffed up with the idea that they'

1. Vide Notes.

2. अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः, स्वयं धीराः पण्डितन्मन्यमानाः ।

दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढा, अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्वाः ॥

are truly wise, go round and round like blind led by blind.'²
 'Hereafter never rises before the mind of an ignorant child, deluded by the desire or wealth and worldly prosperity. Such people who say : 'This is the world, there is no other,' come again and again under my sway.'³

These words were uttered perhaps more than a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. One of the principle features of the writings of the ancient Seers of Truth in India was the knowledge of the pre-existence, continuity and immortality of the human soul. If we see the most ancient writings, I mean the Rg Veda, there we read such prayers which show that they believed in the existence of the soul after death and immortal life. In the *Isha-Upanisad* of the *Sukla-Yayur-Veda*, we find also,

'Oh God ! take me there where lies the source of everlasting light of the universe, which is indestructible, where immortality regins supreme and make me immortal.'⁴

In a funeral hymn we read :

'Go forth, go forth on these ancient paths on which our forefathers departed, having left all sins, go home again and radiant in thy body, come together with them.'⁵

3. न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं, प्रमद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम् ।
 अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी, पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥
 —कठ-उपनिषत्, १।२।६
4. अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्, विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ;
 सुयोध्यस्मज्जहुराणमेनो, भूयिष्ठां ते नम-उक्तिम् विधेम ।
 —ईश उपनिषत्, १।१।८
5. प्रेहि प्रेहि पथिभिः पूर्वैभि यत्रा नः पूर्वे पितरः परेयः ;
 उभा राजान स्वषया मदन्ता, यमम् पश्यासि वरूणम् च देवम् ।
 —ऋग्वेद १०।१४।७।८

There are hundreds of such passages in the Veda, which show clearly that the ancient Aryas believed in the existence of soul after death. They believed in the spirit-world of the fathers or Pitris where the departed soul goes after death, and the king of that world of fathers was Yama, the first of the mortals who became immortal.

The ancient Aryas or the Hindus believed in a heaven which they called '*brahmaloka*' or 'the kingdom of Brahmā', the creator and Father of the universe. Then gradually when the ethical ideas of right and wrong became very strong in the minds of the Hindus and when they understood the law of action and reaction, they believed that those who perform good and virtuous deeds in this life with the hope of getting reward, go to the realm of the fathers and stay there as long as the results of good works will not be finished. When a departed individual has reaped the fruits of all of his good and virtuous works, which brought him to that realm, he is bound to come down to the earth and to be born again, according to his desires and action of his past birth. The spirit-world of the fathers was supposed to be in the moon. From the very ancient times, the Hindus had a belief that the moon was the land of the dead, and it was the repository of all the departed souls, and all the 'germs of life came to this earth from the moon. It rained from the moon on this earth. The path, by which the departed souls go to the lunar regions and enjoy there all the pleasures and happiness as result of their own works and then return to the earth and are born again, was

called *pitriyāna* or the path of the forefathers.⁶ All mortals are bound to go by this path and return to this earth.

But those, who do good works not for getting reward, nor seeking anything on return and who live the life of purity and righteousness, will go to the *brahmaloka*, the realm of Brahmā. There they will stay in all glory, until the end of a cycle of evolution. In the meantime, if any one of them can attain knowledge of the highest wisdom of oneness which is the absolute Reality, he will be free and will remain as one with the supreme Being all through eternity. Brahmā, the Creator, who is the king of this realm of the gods, will, in the end of one cycle, be free. Then in the beginning of another cycle, another Brahmā will arise from the infinite source of the absolute existence, intelligence, and bliss. He will be the Creator or Projector of that cycle. This process will continue all the time. This Brahmā or Creator is like the Governor of a state. One fills the post for sometime, does his duty and then retires. Another, in the meantime, becomes a candidate to be the Brahmā, and so he becomes. In this way, hundreds of Brahmās have come and gone. But those, who after attaining to this realm of the gods, do not gain the highest wisdom of oneness, come back at the beginning of the new cycle to this earth, and, according to their desires and works, they will be

6. सम्बत्सरो वै प्रजापतिस्तस्यायने दक्षिणमोत्तरञ्च, तद् ये ह वै तदिष्टापूतं कृतमित्युपासते, ते चान्द्रमसमेव लोकं अभिजायन्ते । 'ते एव पुनरावर्तन्ते*** ।'

born again as human beings of the highest order. Most righteous and virtuous will strive for the highest knowledge or realization of oneness. This is what they called *devayāna*, the path of the *devas* or bright ones. These two paths are described fully in the *Upanishads* in a metaphorical language, which is generally difficult to understand. They describe how the departed souls go from this earth to those regions, what stages they pass through, what experiences they gather, how they return, how they are born and so forth. Those who go by *pitriyāna* or the path of the departed fathers, are such people who are charitable, who do good to others and perform virtuous deeds. Such people, when they die,

‘go through smoke, then to night, then to dark fifteen days, from thereto the six months when the sun moves south, from there to the world of the fathers, from the world of the fathers to moon.’⁷

These are the principal stages like smoke, night, dark fifteen days, and each of these has a spirit as its ruler. These spirits take care of the departed souls and help them, as guides do in a strange country. Each of these spirits introduces them to the other spirits and thus they go very quickly to their proper destinations. There they will meet their relatives and departed

7. ‘ * * धूममाभसभवान्त, धूमाद्रात्रिम्, रात्रेरपक्षीयमाणपक्षम्
 अपक्षीयमाणपक्षाद्यान् यन्मासान् दक्षिणादित्य एति, मासेभ्यः
 पितृलोकाञ्चन्द्रम्, ते चन्द्रं प्राप्यन्तं भवन्ति, तांस्तत्र देवा यथा सोमं राजानमाप्याय-
 स्वापक्षीवस्वेति, एवमेनांस्तत्र भक्षयन्ति, * * कीटाः पतङ्गाः यदिहं दन्दशूकम्’ ।
 —बृहदारण्यक् उपनिषत् ६।२।५६

Vide also *Devayāna* in *Rgveda*, X. 19.1, and *Pitriyana* in *Rgveda*, X. 2.1. Cf. *Kausitaki Upanisad*, 1.4.

friends. There the souls become favourite of the gods, and live there as long as their works will permit. Then when they return,

'they first take ethereal invisible bodies (like minute germs of life), then they pass through ether into air, from air into the clouds, and than, they fall with rain drops on the earth, then they enter into human bodies through some kinds of food ; then they are born again.'⁸

In this process, you must remember that the law of what the modern evolutionists call natural selection, acts, and by that law they will come through food into such bodies, where they will find suitable environments and conditions to fulfil their desire and to reap the results of their own works. During this process of return, their whole mental feelings and intelligence become contracted, and they do not feel anything, nor can they remember anything. Then they become good or bad, according to their latent tendencies, which they possess, and which they want to manifest.

But those, who worship God with pure heart and sincere devotion and those, who are righteous and work for others without any hope of getting reward and are unselfish and believe in an extra-cosmic

8. (क) मासेम्यः पितृलोकं पितृलोकोदाकाशं, आकाशाच्चन्द्रमसं ; एष सोमो राजा, तद्देवानामन्नं, तं देवा भक्षयन्ति ॥४॥ तस्मिन् यावत् सम्पातमुषित्वा अथेतमेवाध्वानं पुनर्निवर्तते यथेतं आकाशम्, आकाशाद्वायुं, वायुर्भूत्वा घूमो भवति, घूमो भूत्वा अन्नं भवति ॥५॥ अन्नं भूत्वा मेघो भवति मेघो, भूत्वा प्रवर्षति, ते इह द्रोहि-यवा ओषधि वनस्पतस्तिल-माषा इति जायन्ते ; अतो वै खलु दुर्निष्प्रपतरं, यो यो ह्यन्नमत्ति, यो रेतः सिञ्चति, तद्भूय एव भवति ॥६॥

—छान्दोग्य-उपनिषत् ५।२०।४-६

(ख) बृहदारण्यक उपनिषत् ६।२।१६

personal God with a certain name and form and are dualistic or monotheistic in their ideas after their death, will go to heaven by *devayāna* or the path which leads to God :

‘They go first to light,, from light to day, to the waxing half of the moon, to six months when the sun goes north, then to the place of bright spirits or devas, then to the sun, then to the region of lightning., there a spirit of a high order comes and takes them to the world of Brahmā where they dwell until the end of the cycle.’⁹

Then they may return in the next cycle, if they do not realize the highest truth of oneness. In this case, you will have to understand that all these light, day, etc. must be taken as stages under the guidance of spirits that are at their head or their rulers.¹⁰

These mythological descriptions and poetic imaginations of the ancient simple minded thinkers of India are considered by many as childish talk, and

9. (क) ते य एवमेतद्ब्रुवुः ये चाग्नी अरण्ये श्रद्धां सत्यमुपासते, तेष्विचरिभिसं भवन्ति, अचिषोऽहः अह्न आपूर्यमाणपक्षम्, आपूर्यमाणपक्षाद्यानधन्मासानुदङ् आदित्य ऐति ; मासेभ्यो देवलोकं, देवलोकादादित्यं, आदित्याह्नैशतम् : तान् वैश्व- तानिपुरुषो मानस एत्य ब्रह्मलोकान् गमयति ; ते तेषु. ब्रह्मलोकेषु पराः परावतो बसन्ति ; तेषां न पुनरावृत्तिः ।

—बृहदारण्यक उपनिषत् ६।२।१५

(ख) मासेभ्यः संवत्सरं, संवत्सरादादित्यं, आदित्याञ्चन्द्रमसं, चन्द्रमसो विद्यातं तत्पुरुषोऽमानवः स एनान् ब्रह्म गमयति, एष देवयानः पन्था इति ।

—छान्दोग्य उपनिषत् ५।१०।२

(ग) अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः पन्थाया उत्तरायनम् ।

तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥

—भगवद्गीता ७।२४

Wide also प्रश्नोपनिषत् १।१०

10. Cf. *Chāndogya Upanishad*, 5 : 10.3-6, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, 6.2.15-16, *Bhagavad Gītā*, 8.24-26.

by some as nonsense, Whatever that might be, one thing, which we learn from all these descriptions, is that those ancient thinkers understood that the soul cannot be destroyed after death, and that it has some purpose to fulfil, and that it must continue to manifest either on this earth or in some other planet, according to its desires and works, and that all these heavens are transitory and not unchangeable Reality. This is a great gain indeed. In very few religions, you will find such an idea. All religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity or Mohammedanism, end in going to heaven, and they describe heaven as eternal and permanent and imperishable place. But the Hindu religion does not teach that. In other religions, the highest ideal is going to a heaven, where we can get many things, which we cannot get here, and where all enjoyments will come incessantly without any pain or trouble. But with the Hindus this is not the highest state desirable. All these heavens and places of enjoyments are phenomenal and transitory, (even if they last for millions of years still millions of years when compared to eternity is nothing). It is for this reason Kṛṣṇa, the Incarnation of the universal Spirit, says to Arjuna :

‘All the different worlds of spirits, gods and others, beginning with the highest heaven of Brahmā are places from where one must return, but he who attains to me the supreme Spirit, will remain with Me for ever, will never be bound by any law of nature.’¹¹

11. आब्रह्ममुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।
मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जनम न विद्यते ॥

Therefore, in Vedānta, you do not find any special value of these heavens, nor does it deny its existence. Of course, in the heavens, the soul will stand face to face with God before His throne, and God will ask him : Who art thou ? The soul will answer : 'What Thou art that I am'. But along with the higher conceptions of Vedānta, all these heavens and desires for heavens gradually become quite insignificant. This idea of a personal God, sitting on a throne and receiving the pious souls, we find in the ancient writings of the Hindus, I mean the Vedas.

In the Zend Āvestā, we find a similar idea, of a personal God, Ahura Mazdā, sitting on a throne and judging the conduct of the departed souls and rewarding or punishing them accordingly. The Hindus did not believe at first in any hell, but the Parsees did. In the Āvestā, we read what happens, when a man dies.¹² The ideas of heaven and hell which we find in the Āvestā, influenced to a great extent the Jewish and later Mohammedan idea of heaven through the

12. In the *Sāṅkhāyana-Āraṇyaka* (Ch. III, 1-7), we find, it is described in a beautiful way. There the king Gārgyaṅi (Gārgyaṅi?) said to Aruni and his son Svetaketu : "Those who depart from this world all go to the moon: Their breaths swell the first fortnight (of the moon) ; in the second it brings them to birth again. The moon is also the door of the world of heaven. * * it rains down on earth, becoming itself rain. * * Him, when he has arrived, it asks 'Who art thou ?' To it should he reply, 'From the light I came as seed, O seasons, from that produced as the fifteen-fold father-land. * * I am born and again born as the twelve-month (year) and the thirteen-month (year), from the twelve-fold, the thirteen-fold father. I know this and I recognize this. Then do ye bear me, seasons, to deathlessness. By that truth that penance, I am the season of the seasons.' 'Who art thou ?' 'I am Thou.' He then sends him on : Cf : also *Kaushītaki-Brāhmanopaniṣad*, 1.1-6.

13. *Vide Notes.*

Jews. We know that the Old Testament is silent about the fate of the soul after death. In the New Testament, however, we find such ideas which perfectly coincide with the Persian descriptions. The Persians believe in the last day of judgment and a general resurrection, when the victory of good over evil will be secured. The ancient Hebrews did not bother their head much about what becomes of the soul after death. They believed that as God breathed life into man, that breath, which they called *Nephesh*, or *Neshama* or *Ruach*, came from God and returned to him after the death of the body. But afterwards when the Jews came in contact with the Persians, they accepted their ideas. The Egyptians, as has been said before, had a belief that the soul of man is a 'double', like a shadow which remains as long as the body remains, but if the body be mutilated or destroyed then soul will be mutilated and destroyed.

The Chaldeans also believed in a 'double', which will be annihilated, if the bodies were destroyed. They expected a resurrection of the corpse. This belief we find amongst the Christians of today. Amongst the Greek philosophers, Pythagoras, Plato and their disciples believed in the immortality of the soul and in the theory of transmigration. Plato's ideas regarding the nature of the soul and his descriptions about what becomes after death, are exactly the same as we find in the *Upanishads*. But Plato believed in a place of punishment for the evil-doers. Those who have done wicked deeds and sinful acts, will go through sufferings and penalties, and when they are purified will obtain rewards for their food and

deeds and virtuous acts. Plato believed that the human soul may migrate to human body or to a beast, and may return again to a human body.

Thus there are many speculations, regarding the future existence. Now, let us understand clearly what Vedānta has to say on this point. In the first place, Vedānta says there is no such thing as death, which means destruction. It admits death in the sense of a change of forms. This kind of death is a constant attendant of life. Life is impossible without death or changes of forms. We are dying every moment. After every seven years it is said that our bodies completely renew all its constitutive elements, but still the form is preserved. Although every particle of body is changed, still we continue to exist. Our continuity is not broken, and we remember things and events that happened 14 or 21 years ago. This continuity of the conscious agent cannot be explained by any physical or chemical laws. Then again Vedānta gives a death blow to the materialistic theory, by saying that thought or feeling or intelligence can never be produced by any mechanical or molecular motion. Motion produces motion and nothing else. Therefore motion of the atoms of the body will never produce feeling of conscious state. It is due to some other higher power which we call thought-force or soul-power.

That power is neither yours nor mine. It exists in nature. The whole universe is like an ocean of one living substance which contains the soul power, the source of intelligence and consciousness. Our present

consciousness is a reflection or manifestation of that infinite source of consciousness. In an ocean, there are rising innumerable waves. If we study minutely we shall see that each wave will continue to move on and on, and if the ocean be infinite, then it will never stop, and it will move on from eternity to eternity, and ultimately it will come back to the same place from where it started. Similarly our individual lives are nothing but so many individual waves of that infinite ocean. Each wave is moving onward to complete the infinite circle; so each one of us has a beginningless past and an endless future. The so-called surface scientists of today do not admit it, they are very busy in thinking of the race or species. They ignore the fact that if there were no individuals, there would not have been any race or species. Race or species is an abstract concept which exists in our mind. It is the result of our generalization, while the individuals are the undeniable facts of nature. Each of these waves start as simple germs of life, which contain all the potentialities and which will be manifested in future and which try to make those potentialities into actualities by expression or manifestation through the various forms. The process, by which it expresses, is called 'evolution', which means change of forms. This manifestation would have been impossible, if the forms were not changed, if the old forms were not changed, and if the old forms were not thrown aside and new forms developed. Such being the case, this change of form is what we call 'death'. The death is the death of a particular form and not of the substance nor of the force. Death of one

form reproduces, or gives birth to another form, as the death of the seed-form produces the tree-form and so forth. Again that which is reproduced, will die and then reproduce another and so on.

Therefore, Vedānta says that which has birth must die, and that which is dead, must be born again.¹⁴ There is no birth or death in the soul life. It is eternal and immortal. It takes that form which it wants to take. Outward form has its cause in mental form, and mental or thought form is the result of our desire or craving or intense longing. So our future life will be determined by our desires, tendencies, longings and works we do. Vedānta does not care for heaven or hell. It says that those, who want to go to heaven, will create a heaven and will go there and enjoy. Those who think of hell, will see hell. Those who think that they are sinners, are really sinners. What thou thinkest, thou shalt become. So all these heavens and hells are the different conditions of our mind. They do not exist outside. As long as we are in the state of ignorance, we have such dreams. But when we realize the Truth of oneness of our real nature with the universal Spirit, then we are free from birth or death and heaven or hell. Our real nature returns to its pure conditions and reigns in its own glory all through eternity.

CHAPTER FIVE

REBIRTH OF THE SOUL

The term soul—Materialistic thinkers—Everything is subject to the law of cause and effect—Scientific thinkers—A germ of life—Mind and its functions—Psychic powers—Rebirth of the soul does not mean the same thing as transmigration—Metempsychosis and reincarnation—Births according to the merits and demerits of deeds—What is transmigration—Migrating substance—Mythological theory of transmigration—The belief of the Hindus—Rational minds do not believe in the retrogression of the human souls into animal forms—Doctrine of reincarnation is based upon the theory of evolution—The passages of the *Upanishads*—Reincarnation of the soul does not mean the same thing as expressed by the Buddhist philosophers—One-birth theory—The Christian theologians on reincarnation—the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism—Time has no absolute existence—What nature teaches—The Greek philosophes about doctrine of reincarnation—One-birth theory and heredity do not explain the mystery of rebirth—The protoplasmic cell—Theories against heredity—Illustrations of reincarnations.

Rebirth of the soul presupposes its existence as an intelligent entity ; it is separable and independent of the gross physical body. By the term 'ātmā' we mean that centre of self-conscious activity which thinks, reacts on the personal or external phenomena, and consciously performs the functions of life. How this soul comes into existence and where does it go after the dissolution of the body, are questions which rise in almost every human mind. They are as old as the appearance of the first man upon this earth.

From ancient times, philosophers and Seers of Truth of all countries and all nations have made

various attempts to unravel the mysteries of the birth, life and death of the individuals upon this planet. Again and again it has been asked : Why do animals and human beings suddenly appear into existence, live for some time, fulfil certain desires, perform marvellous deeds, display some wonderful power and unexpectedly pass away being forced, as it were, to leave their plans and projects of their lives, half-finished and half-fulfilled ?

Why is it that some come into existence to die within a few days or weeks or years, without obtaining an opportunity of knowing or gaining any experience in this vast world of phenomena ? Are these events accidental, or is there a law that governs all these aimless events and phenomena that are happening everyday before our eyes ? Are these individual souls coming and going away without any purpose, or is there an aim behind all these appearances ?

Human minds cannot rest contented, until these questions of vital importance are solved. Materialistic thinkers of the Western countries have thrown overboard all such questions by denying the plan and aim purpose of individual life as well as the existence of soul. They explain this phenomenon by saying that intelligence is caused by non-intelligent forces of nature governed by mechanical laws,—some have gross forms, some finer and the appearance of men and animals are caused by some anatomical combination of atoms and molecules in the process of cosmic evolution. According to them, there is no soul and no life after death, consequently, it is



The Octoplasm in front of the face
of the Medium.



The Spirit amidst the Octoplasm, by the right side of the face of the Medium.

useless to ask such questions ; it is a waste of time and energy to bother our heads regarding the existence of soul or its birth and rebirth ; what good would it do ? But the materialistic explanation do not satisfy the minds of the seekers after truth, nor do they succeed in stopping all these questions, which spontaneously rise in human minds ; on the contrary, it can be shown that the combination of atoms and molecules can never produce consciousness and intelligence, and it is the important factor and only property of the living soul.

Motion produces nothing but motion. It is impossible for the organic functions to produce the knower or translator of those functions into sensations, ideas and thoughts. In the organs, the function of motion will never be that which is not motion like consciousness or intelligence. No consciousness or intelligence is an act of motion. If, however, we study the phenomena of nature with the help of modern science, we understand that the phenomenon of accident or chance has no room in the chain of phenomena, but is guided by the universal law of cause and effect, which is known as the law of causation.

Every event, that has occurred in the past or will happen in future, must have some definite cause behind it, and by denying this law, we not only deny the truth of nature, but we deny also the fundamental principle of modern science, which is 'something cannot come out of nothing'. Applying this truth to the facts of birth and life of individuals, whether animal or human, we understand that they are subject

to the law of cause, and they are governed by the law of cause and effect ; and the cause of life on this earth of all individuals, is different in each ; they are not accidental appearances, and they cannot be accidental. We inquire into the cause that produced the work, i. e. we inquire into the conscious activity of the individual. Does it exist outside of the effect, as some people believe that the cause of the human being is some supernatural being, dwelling outside of the universe ? Does this cause exist outside of the effect, or does it form a part and parcel of the effect itself ?

This is most puzzling, and many of the advanced thinkers have failed in their efforts, to understand the proper relation that exists between a cause and its effect. Upon the proper knowledge of the relation of a cause to its effect, depends the solution of the problem.

All the scientific thinkers of the world come to the conclusion that the true cause of a thing does not lie outside of a thing, but lies in the thing itself, just as the cause of a tree does not lie outside of the tree, but in the tree itself. Cause means the unmanifested state of the effect, and effect means the manifested state of the cause.

The whole tree lies in a dormant state in the seed. Nothing comes from outside of the seed, but it was in the seed, and the external conditions and environments only bring out that which existed potentially, or help in the manifestation of the latent power. The seed of an oak tree can never produce any other thing than an oak tree, however powerful the environ-

mental conditions may be. The environmental conditions cannot add to the seed one iota to that which did not exist in the seed from the very beginning. Therefore, that which we find in the effect, must have existed in the causal state from the very beginning. All the peculiarities, as manifested in in the effect and the tendencies that are to be found in the effect, are nothing but the expressions of the same peculiarities, same tendencies and same properties, that existed in the germ of life from the very beginning.

Applying this truth to the phenomena of birth and life of individuals on this earth, we can understand the process and every step of the evolution of the germ of life. Modern science tells us that a germ of life, by going through the process of evolution, can appear as a human being. If this be true, then everything that exist in a human being, must have existed in a germ of life from the very beginning, in a potential state. We shall have to admit that mind and all its functions, such as desires and tendencies, and must have existed in that germ of life, must have remained latent until the time had come, when these latent power found favourable conditions for their expression. They have not come into existence out of nothing, because the law is what exists, must have existed from the very beginning; otherwise we would run the risk committing the the error of admitting the fallacious argument that something could have come out of nothing, and that something has come into existence from that state, which had no trace of it whatever.

These germs of life are nothing but minute invisible centres of forces, clothed with minute particles of etherial matter; and having no form, they can appear in any form, either human or animal, in order to manifest and express certain powers, lying dormant in those germs of life. Although these germs of life are subject to evolution, growth and progress, still they are not destructible like the gross physical forms of the universe. These germs possess vital force as well as mental powers and intelligence.

If you study the forms of the psychic powers of the microcosmic animal-tribes or micro-organisms, you will understand that the minute germs of life express power and intelligence, and even these germs of life manifest these power through grossforms, by, manufacturing them, but that manufacture depends upon the law, which governs the gross material universe; and at the time of the dissolution of the gross forms, all these manifested powers conserve and remain latent in a minute subtle germ of life, by the law of persistence of force, until the time comes, when the conditions become favourable for the re-manifestation of those power, that have become dormant.

These germs of life are called by various names. We may call them the vehicles of consciousness. Some call them individual souls or egos. The Indian philosophers describe them as subtle bodies of individuals. These subtle bodies, being governed by the law of cause and effect and being subject to the law of action and reaction, appear again, either

on this plane or on some other, to express some powers, to manifest the latent tendencies and to gain knowledge and experience, by coming in contact with these objects of sense which exist on the material plane.

The re-appearance of the germs of life in gross physical forms, whether animal or human, is called manifestation, which is known and understood by the theory of rebirth of the soul or the doctrine of reincarnation, as it is called in the Vedānta philosophy. By rebirth of the soul, Vedānta does not mean the same thing as transmigration or metempsychosis. In Western countries, there are many thinkers and writers who do not understand the difference, that exists between transmigration and theory of reincarnation or rebirth ; consequently they write and create great confusion in the minds of the readers.

But the transmigration or metempsychosis¹ has a meaning entirely different from that of reincarnation, which means the passing of the soul from one body after death into another, or, in other words, the soul, after dwelling in one body for a certain length of time, leaves it at the time of death, and enters into another body, which is ready to receive it, in order to gain experience and knowledge in those lives, or through those forms, or to reap the results of the works or deeds of the previous lives. It may enter into a human or an animal form. The doers that have performed good deeds, will enter into human forms or angelic forms, but the doers that have

1. Vide Notes.

performed wicked deeds, will appear in animal forms, and remaining as animals for some time, will perhaps take human forms, and then angelic forms, and then go on and return again to this earth in the form of higher animals. Thus transmigration means the revolution of the soul from body to body and excludes the idea of growth, progress and evolution from lower to higher states of consciousness.

The migrating substance, being of constant quantity and quality, chooses the forms and bodies, according to the bent of character or desires. It is governed by the law of causation, or action and reaction. In ancient Egypt, they believed that after the death of the body, the souls travelled for thousands of years from one body to another. Pythagoras, Plato and their followers believed in the theory of transmigration and metempsychosis of the soul.²

Pythagoras says :

‘After death, the rational mind, having been freed from the chains of the body, assumes an ethereal vehicle, and passes into the region of the dead, where it remains, till it is sent back to this world, to inhabit some other body, human or animal. After undergoing successive purgations, when it is sufficiently purified, it is received among the goods, and returns to the eternal source from which it first proceeded’.

Plato also believes in this theory. He describes in an allegorical way, how and where the souls go through the process of transmigration. He describes in *Phoedrus* :

‘In the heaven, Zeus, the Father and Lord of all creatures, drives his winged car, ordering all things and superintending

2. Vide Notes.

them. * * Thus when the soul is unable to follow and fails to behold the vision of Truth, she sinks beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice, her feathers fall from her, and she drops to earth and is born again and as human beings or as animals'.

Plato says that ten thousand years must elapse, before the soul can return to the place, from which she came, because she cannot grow her wings in less time. After the first thousand years, the good and evil souls come together to choose of their lives, and instead of reaping the natural consequences of their previous deeds and misdeeds, they are allowed to choose the bodies, according to the experience and bent of character ; some, being disgusted with mankind, choose animal bodies ; they like to be lions, eagles and other beings, while others desire to try again, becoming human beings, and see what experience they can get.³

Through this mythological theory, you can understand what idea is conveyed by the theory of transmigration or metempsychosis. In India, from ancient times the theory of transmigration prevailed, but it was different from that of Plato. The Hindus never believed that the souls were allowed to choose their lives according to the bent of character, but they were bound to reap the natural consequences of their deed and misdeeds and enjoy or suffer by coming in bodies, either animal or human. But even today there are many who believe in the transmigration of souls, that the souls after death can go back to animals and live as animal for some time, and then go

3. Vide Swami Abhedananda : *Reincarnation*, pp. 89-90.

up to heaven and live there for some time ; but the rational minds in India do not believe in the retrogression of the human souls into animal forms, they believe in the doctrine souls the rebirth of the souls, or reincarnation.

The doctrine of reincarnation is based upon the theory of evolution, and depends upon the law of cause and sequence, or action and reaction. These germs of life come into existence to fulfil certain powers and desires, and to gain certain experience. They do not go back to the animal forms, but they live on the human plane, and continue to exist on the human plane, being subject to the law of evolution. It admits the growth and progress through experience and knowledge of the phenomenal world. It is true, however, that there are passages in the writings of the *Upanishads*, which apparently refer to the retrogression of the human souls into animal nature, but they do not necessarily mean that these souls will have to take animal forms.⁴ How absurd it is to think that the human souls, after manifesting human powers, will choose a dog-body to manifest those powers ? How can a lower contain that which is greater ? But there may be some people, who may live like animals even, when they have human bodies, as we may find among us many people like cats and dogs and snakes in human form, and they are often more vicious than natural cats, dogs or snakes. That kind of retrogression to the animal nature is the result of wicked deeds and wicked thoughts on the animal plane. These

4. *Vide Notes.*

deeds and thoughts must produce their results in the manifestation of the animal nature. But this retrogression is only temporary. It helps the individual souls in gaining the experience on the animal plane only for a time, until they come out of those states, after which they will manifest the higher powers, latent in those germs of life. Wicked thoughts and deeds are only our own mistakes, which we have committed on account of our ignorance. No one is born so perfect as to commit no mistakes whatever. So every mistake is a great teacher in the long run. We must understand this. But as it is impossible for a human soul to gain all experience in one short period of one hundred years or more or less, we must have to admit the doctrine of evolution and, consequently, the theory of the rebirth, or the reincarnation of the souls, or germs of life, in order to fulfil the purpose of life, and gain experience in all the different phases of evolution.

The reincarnation of the soul does not mean the same thing, as experienced by the Buddhist philosophers, who deny the permanence of the soul entity or the permanent entity of the soul. They say that the individual, after the death of the body, appears again in some other form, but that being of the being is not the same being, but a being of a similar nature. That creates a difficulty. If we perform certain acts, in order to reap the results of those acts, we need the same individual entity ; we must admit that there is the continuation of the same being, otherwise, it would be just like a person eating food and another getting satisfaction. Then there would be no

law and no hermony in this universe. Those, who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation, believe either in the one-birth theory or in the theory of heredity. But these two theories do not satisfy all the questions of human minds, and they do not explain the difference. Those, who believe in the one-birth theory, cannot explain, why the individual souls come into existence, live for a certain time and go away, and where do they go ?

They do not understand the purpose of life, which is to gain knowledge and experience, and they cannot understand why little children live and die within a few days or weeks or months, without any opportunity of knowing anything, what purpose of life has been served by that ? The Christian theologians, believing in the dogma of one-birth, explain that these little children, who die after birth, will go to heaven and be saved by the eternal Father and enjoy celestial bliss throughout eternity. If the Christians only believe in this dogma, they ought to pray for the death of their children at the time of birth, and ought to be thankful to the merciful Father, when their little babies die and the grave colses over dead bodies. But that theory does not explain the difficulties, and it takes for granted certain dogmatic solutions, which do not explain any of the diffiiculties, and they are neither rational nor scientific.

Three great religions of the world, Judaism and its two offspring, Christianity and Mohammedanism still uphold that theory of life and death. They believe that we have come into existence, remain for a short time, and pass away either going to heaven or to

the place of eternal punishment. Those, who believe in such theory, cannot make their minds free from the impressions that they have received during their childhood. The followers of these three great religions believe that the souls come into existence, being created for the first time out of nothing, and continue to do certain works, being forced by that Creator, but they will have to enjoy or suffer all throughout eternity for the works, performed during the short existence and which they were forced to do, not by their own free will, but by the will of the Creator, who put that kind of free will, vicious or virtuous, into beings. It is as absurd as that one person, who is forced to do all the acts of another person, and is forced to receive the punishment or reward for the acts that are not done by himself.

The only way out of this difficulty is to admit the permanence of the germ of life. If these souls exist today and will continue to exist throughout eternity, they must have existed from eternity, and there must be the re-appearance of that which existed in some form or other.

There is another consideration, and that is this, the beginning, the ending and the continuing are the conception of human minds that depend upon our conception of time, but we all know that time has no absolute existence.⁵ It is only a form of our knowledge of our nature, as related to the experience of nature.

5. In Advaitic conception, time is regarded as an appearance, an effect (*karyam*) of *avidya* or *maya*. It has merely an empirical reality, but is obliterated in the ultimate Reality.

outside.⁶ This conception vanishes at the time of death, just as it does every night, when we are in sound sleep. Can you remember, or do you have the idea of time, when your mind is absolutely resting in sound sleep ? No, you cannot, because that conception vanishes for the time being and the souls wake up after the sleep of death, just in the same way, as insects wake up in the spring after sleeping through the long, hard winter, or as a chrysalis, in the bed of a cocoon, spun by itself in the month of autumn. Nature teaches us this truth of rebirth, by this resemblance between sleep and death and by the rejuvenation of a chrysalis in the spring. Souls wake up after the sleep of death, and put on new bodies, in order to fulfil certain purposes, and gain certain experiences, to reap the results of their previous action, being subject to the law of cause and effect, just in the same way, as we throw away our old clothes and put on new ones. Therefore it is said in Vedānta :

‘As we throw away our old garments and put on new ones, so the individual ego or germ of life, after throwing away the old body, manufactures new form for the purpose of fulfilling the aim of life.’⁷

Through this doctrine of reincarnation, the vast majority of people in the old world, in India, China and Japan, have found consolation in their lives, and solved the extremely difficult problems that disturb

6. Immanuel Kant says in his *Critique of Pure Reason* : ‘Time is nothing but the form of our internal intuition. Take away the peculiar condition of our sensibility, and the idea of time vanishes, because it is not inherent in the objects, but in the subject only that perceives them.’—*Max Muller's Translation.*

7. *Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch. II, 22.

the minds of the scientists and other thinkers of the world. Even in the Western countries, philosophers like Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Lessing Bruno, Goethe and others ; poet like Wordsworth, Tennyson ; theologians like Dr. Julius, Mueller, Dr. Dorner, Ruckert, and others, have belived in the doctrine of transmigration or rebirth of the soul. The ancient philosophers like Origen believed in the doctrine of reincarnation, because this is the only doctrine that satisfies human minds, and answers all the questions on this subject scientifically, and explains facts.

If the one-birth theory and heredity do not explain all the difficulties, we ought to try another theory, which is better and more satisfactory. At one time, the idea of reincarnation and rebirth of the soul spread so wonderfully amongst the Christians of ancient times that Justinian was obliged to pass a law in the Council of Constantinople in 538 A.D. to stop spread of this doctrine, which would kill the Christian dogma. The law was this :

‘Whoever shall support the mythical presentation of the pre-existence of the soul, and, consequently, the wonderful opinion of its return, let him be Anathema’.

Those, who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation, try to explain these difculties, through the theory of heredity. But does this theory explain all the questions ?

Suppose there is a young man of 25 years old, and he has inherited certain peculiarities and characteristics like talent for music, or possessing a crooked nose, or a peculiar giggle in his laugh, in which he resem-

bles his grandfather. Now this young man, according to the supporters of this theory, has inherited all these things from his grandfather, who died six years before his birth. All these peculiarities were handed down to this young man, before he was born, and came into a human body, and when he was like a protoplasmic cell or a jelly-like substance, which has neither nose nor mouth. Even at that time he inherited that queer giggle and crooked nose through his grandfather.

This protoplasmic cell was smaller than a pin's head, and if you look at it through a microscope, you could not distinguish it from that of a dog or a cat, or a bird, or a tree. Even then it had all these peculiarities. Before the brain and nerve centres began to take forms, the musical talents and tendencies, possessed by this young man, existed in the protoplasmic cell, which came down from his grandfather. Does it not seem to you absurd to think that one protoplasmic cell can contain all these tendencies, the crooked nose and giggle and talents, when there was neither brain, nor mouth, nor nose ? There are many scientists who believe in the theory of heredity, but they cannot explain how one single cell can contain all the mental and physical traits and characteristics and peculiarities of father and grandfather, mother and grandmother.

You have millions of cells in this human body. But what kind of cell is that which can reproduce all these powers and tendencies, which are possessed by each one of us at present ? This is the most difficult of all problems the scientific minds have encountered.

There have been many theories against this theory of heredity. We must not forget that an organism can inherit only, where there is predisposition to inherit, otherwise it cannot.⁸ Supposing this theory of heredity a truth,, what have we learned ? That the whole of the young man existed before his birth in the protoplasmic cell, the whole character was there. Does it not seem the same thing as the pre-existence of the human being ? The whole human nature must have existed in that germ of life in some form of other. All the powers, intelligence, and desires must have existed there, otherwise we will have to admit that these powers have come out of nothing, which would be absurd and unscientific.

Again, the theory of heredity cannot explain all the causes which produce geniuses and prodigies. On the contrary, the doctrine of rebirth of the soul or reincarnation, explains all these things satisfactorily.

Why was it that the shepherd Mangiamelo could calculate like an automatic, when he was 5 years of age ? The child Zerab Cloburn, when he was under 8 years age, could answer the most difficult of mathematical problems without any figures. Mozart, the great musician, could repeat a sonata when he was 4 years age, and when he was 8 years of age he wrote an opera. Hoffman could play beautifully, before he was 10 years of age. Blind Tom did not inherit his powers from his parents. He was a

8. This has been elaborately discussed elsewhere in connection with the discussion of Weisman's theory of the 'continuity of the germ-plasm.'— Cf. Swami Abhedananda : *Reincarnation*, p. 35.

slave and born of slave parents on a plantation. One day he went to his master's parlour, when the family was at dinner and he sat at the piano and began to play music which he had never heard. But in music he was a master. He could compose music by himself and play his own compositions for three quarters of an hour, and after once hearing music, he could repeat it note for note. He never had a lesson and could not have understood lessons. These illustrations disprove the theory of family heredity or the theory of 'cumulative heredity'.⁹ Those, who believe in the theory of heredity, say that genius is the result of cumulative heredity, which presents itself by gradual degree, i.e., from less to greater and still greater and so on. But in the whole history of the genealogy of geniuses, all the great examples like Shakespeare or Lincoln or Jesus or Buddha or Sankaracharya, we do not find any trace of genius in the family of these great men, on the contrary, their parents and grand-parents did not show such powers.

There had been many shepherds in Galilee at that time, but Jesus the Christ was the only one, who could not inherit any thing from the shepherded nature of his parents and relatives. There have been many young princes and kings in India, but there was only one Buddha. Why was it ? Does the theory of heredity explain all these instances ? No. If we do exist now, we cannot think of our annihilation or destruction. Destruction, in the sense of annihila-

9. Vide Swami Abhedananda : *Reincarnation*, pp. 46-47.

tion, is impossible in this world of reality. If we exist today, we cannot think of our non-existence either before or after. Where did the soul exist before the birth of this body, no one can tell. We cannot find the beginning of the soul or its end.

There are some objections that have been raised by many, who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation. One question had been asked very often : 'If we did exist before, why do we not remember it?' If we examine our own lives, we do not remember many things, but still we know we did them. Do you remember what you did on the eighth of February, 25 years ago in the afternoon? Perhaps you will say you do not know, because you cannot remember. Our memory is only that power of the mind, by which we can recall the latent impressions and ideas, stored up in the mind. Memory grows, and if we develop our memory, we will remember many things, which we do not know at present. In India, there are many Yogis, who can remember their past experiences. In ancient Greece, it is known that ancient philosophers came to India to find out the secret of their wonderful knowledge, which the Hindus possessed. Some people say that if they could remember the past, how happy they would be ; but perhaps if they did, they would make a bad use of their present.

If you knew that you were going to have some great misfortunes within a few a days or months, would you be equal to performing the duties on hand at present ? Rather you would constantly remember those misfortunes. We should not try

to satisfy the idle curiosity, by trying to know what we were in the past, but let us make our present useful, and do such acts that will help us in becoming better than what we are today. Make the best use of our present until the time comes, when the higher illumination will reveal to us all the past and future like a panorama before our spiritual eyes, and then we shall be able to say as Sri Krishna said to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* ;

'Both you and I have passed through many births, you know them not, while I know them all.'¹⁰

10. बहुनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।
तान्यहं वेद सबाणि न त्वं वेथ परन्तप ।

CHAPTER SIX

THE SOUL AND ITS DESTINY

Questions of the soul and its destiny—Popular belief among the Christians—The idea of eternal life among different nations—Arguments of the scientists about destiny of the soul—Psychology of destiny—The old materialistic theory about it—Self-consciousness cannot be produced by the combination of matter—Psychological researches—What are matter, knowledge and consciousness—Matter produces nothing but matter—Vedanta explains the destiny of the soul—Modern Spiritualism.

The question of the soul and its destiny spontaneously arises in all minds, whether cultured or uncultured. No other question touches the hearts of men and women so deeply. No other problem arouses their interest so much, or sets their minds to thinking, as this universal problem, concerning the nature of the human soul and its destiny. From ancient times, philosophers, sages, thinkers and prophets have tried their best to solve this great problem to answer this momentous question. In their attempts, they arrived at various conclusions from time to time. Some of their conclusions appealed to some minds. Some say that there is no such thing as the soul, which can exist independent of the body, and which is separate from the body; while others deny its existence entirely. Those, who believe in the existence of the soul as an independent thing from the body, say that it will continue to exist after death i.e, it is immortal. But this question does not disturb the minds of those, who deny the existence of the soul, or believe that the soul is not independent of the body, but it depends on the body as long as the body lives, or the soul

lives in the body. There may be some persons among us, who may be positively sure that they have no soul. But all the religions aim to lead the human mind to the belief that the soul is eternal, that it continues to exist after death, and that it enjoys the pleasure and happiness of heaven or suffers from punishment. But such ideas are based upon the scriptural texts, or upon the writings or sayings of some great sages or Seers.

The popular belief among the Christians is that the immortality of the soul or immortal life was brought into light by Jesus the Christ, and that before the advent of Jesus the Christ, this idea was unknown to the world, and no one can attain the eternal life, except through Jesus the Christ. But, when we study the ancient pre-Christian religions and their scriptures, we find that this idea of eternal life was almost universally known, and was accepted among the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Hindus, Zoroastrians, Romans, Greeks, and Scandinavians. In fact, the study of the ancient religions of the world disproves the Christian dogma that Jesus the Christ alone has brought eternal light into life, and that no one can attain heaven except through him. He might have enlightened the minds of certain Jewish tribes, who did not believe in the scriptures, or who were in ignorance of them. But, as regards bringing this eternal light into life for the first time, we cannot accept.

Although the vast majority of the followers of different religions believe in an eternal soul, which is immortal and continues to exist after death,

still there is a large number of advanced thinkers, who question the authority of these scriptural statements. After making independent researches, they have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a soul, or that the soul is one with the body, or the result of forces, or material particles of the body. They have sufficient strong arguments to support their conclusions. In the same manner, the scientists have strong arguments to prove their theories. They have left no stone unturned to discover a satisfactory answer or results to this great problem. Fine instruments of all kinds have been invented to capture the secret, or to discover that which passes out of the brain at death. The dissected brains of animals have been most carefully examined, and minutely watched to discover what is it that passes out at the time of death from the human body. But, alas ! all such attempts, or all these human efforts have failed. All these human efforts to capture that invisible something i.e., existence of the visible magnetism of animals in the human form have failed, and this has driven many seekers after the soul to the conclusions of the agnostics, atheists and materialists. This inability to capture the soul has made many people deny the existence of the soul altogether, or its continuance after death or after cannot believe in anything that is beyond the sense of perception. No arguments can convince them ; they try to extract intelligence from matter. They say that intelligence, consciousness, and mind are produced by the material body. They believe that consciousness and mind have no independent existence, and

they last so long as the body lasts, and after the dissolution of the body nothing is left, because they cannot see with their sense power the intelligent soul, which passes out of the body. But, at the same time, no one can prove that matter and insentient forces of nature have ever produced the consciousness or intelligence.

If we deny the existence of the soul, as independent of the body or as something which rules over the body, and regulates and directs the organic functions of the body, then we are immediately confronted with the ethical, psychological and philosophical difficulties. The denial of existence of the soul, as independent of the body, will destroy the ethical fitness of things, as if we were nothing but machines.

If we say that our life passes out like the snuff of a candle, then why should we struggle for an existence, and why worry through troubles, miseries and sufferings? What would be the use of living a virtuous life, if we do not continue to exist after this gross body is dead and gone? Why should we not kill our neighbours and get everything out of them that we can, in order to enrich ourselves? Posterity will take care of itself. Every individual will be extremely selfish, and there will be no standard of morality. If we deny the existence of the soul, which lasts after the body is dead and gone, then what is the use of building up our character and what good will it do, if all individuals are going to, pass away into eternal oblivion? All the troubles in acquiring an education will be in vain. The love for wife and children, grown up through general

self-sacrifice, will be cheated out of its full development. Are we then only playing a long and desperate game with worthless counters, if our desires are going to be all for nothing? Is it possible? No; because if this be true, then each and every one of us ought to commit suicide, and get rid of all these sufferings and miseries. We ought to throw all the scriptures into the ocean, and demolish all temples and churches, and live like the beasts on the sense plane. If our souls are not immortal, or if we deny the existence of the soul, there would be no reason to live a virtuous life or for training our children up righteously.

This ethical difficulty will never be removed by those, who do not admit the existence of the soul, as independent of the body. Then again in psychology, we will have to face the same difficulty, if we deny the existence of the soul.

The old materialistic theory that the soul or mind is the result of the functions of the brain, is dead and gone. It is not for sensible people any more.

At the same time, if we deny the existence of the soul, we shall not be able to explain this self-consciousness and ever-working functions of the brain, which can be translated into the sensible ideas and thoughts, and we shall not be able to explain, by what force are they developed into an harmonious whole, by what force are they brought into the form of memory, and by what force acts on the brain cells to produce the conscious identity of the individual ego.

We have the sense of sight, the sense of hearing and the sense of touch, etc. Can the vibrations of

ether produce any one of these senses? Can any mesmeric force produce the sense of seeing or hearing? It is simply impossible. No one has ever seen it. These and many other psychological difficulties will have to be removed.

The self-consciousness has never been produced by the combination of ether or matter, or by electricity. Again, when we analyse this whole material psychologically, what do we gather? The psychological researches lead us to first principles: matter, knowledge and consciousness. The whole universe can be resolved into these three great principles: first, matter, then knowledge or force, and third, consciousness. Of these the matter is immutable or immortal, and psychological researches have also proved that matter has neither been created by anybody, nor are the forces. Matter is indestructible and non-creatable, and they are conserved and continue to exist. If this conservation of matter and forces be true, then we naturally ask why the third principle, through which alone the recognition of all are known, is not also conserved? If matter and knowledge are conserved, and if they are uncreated and indestructible, then how do you know it? You know it by your consciousness and your intelligence. Can you know it by any other force? The recognition of matter and force depends upon your own consciousness, and if those two be conserved, then how is it that your own consciousness will not be conserved? If matter and knowledge be uncreated and indestructible, then how can we prove that your consciousness is creatable and destructible? Where

did you get that knowledge from? How did you know this if you had no consciousness and no intelligence?

Here we must not forget that matter and knowledge form only one half of the universe, and the other half is the subjective world.

If we were all unconscious at this minute, the existence of this room would be nothing to us. We know of it through our consciousness.

The existence of matter and the existence of knowledge must depend upon the consciousness of the individual. If one of them must be conserved, the other must be conserved also. If we analyse the phenomena of the universe and get to the principles that have manufactured this phenomenal universe, we come to the conclusion that both matter and knowledge are conserved, and if they are conserved, your intelligence and consciousness are also conserved. In order to remove these difficulties, we are bound to admit the existence of the soul, independent of the body, which is the source of consciousness and intelligence in us, by which we know our own existence and the existence of other things of the universe. The soul cannot be produced by matter, as matter produces nothing but matter.¹ Newton discovered gravitation, but gravitation never discovered Newton. If you believe in the permanency of your own existence, you yourself are, of course, one with the body, then you think of your self as the body.

But it is very obvious that the body is constantly

1. Vide Swami Abhedananda : *Self-knowledge*, pp. 17-18.

changing. Then where is that permanency in our bodies? This material form or the gross physical organism will be destroyed. Then where will lie our permanency? Not in the body, but in the soul. It is the sense of 'I', which will continue to exist after this body is gone.

Having understood this solution of the problem, concerning the existence of the soul, we question : if the soul continues to exist, what will become of it afterwards, and what is its destiny? Modern science does not help us in answering the question of the destiny of the soul. It is too deep. We can only guess from the premises, upon which the induction can be formed. We get the answer from the Vedānta, which is most universal and most unsectarian. It tells us that the soul, which produces the gross material form, is separable from the body, and can exist independent of the body. It possesses the sense powers, life-force, mind and intellect as well as the impressions of its physical and mental activities, and this soul manufactures the body through the mediums of parents.

Now a question may arise : if the soul continues to exist after death, does it lose its individuality? We get the answer from the Vedānta that it retains its own individuality. It can remember where it was, who were its parents, etc.

Modern Spiritualism and the result of the psychological researches have given us ample proofs of the individual soul after death. Those, who are highly advanced in spiritual life, do not care for their connections with earthly regions, but they rise higher

above them. Souls retain their individuality, and can go to any realms. They can go to the angles, and to heaven. According to Vedānta, there are many heavens, and not only one. By heaven we understand the realm of an existence, where we go to enjoy the pleasures of life. Those, who aspire after the higher spiritual life, will seek higher things. They will go onward and upward, until they are one with the infinite Being.

The Christian and Mohammedan ideas of heaven and hell are the same. Their heavens are the place of eternal happiness and glory for the just, and hell a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.² But, in the Vedānta, you will find that it is not so.

Those souls, which have desires for earthly things, will have to come down to earth. Some souls will remain earthly bound for a certain length of time, say one hundred, or a thousand years. The conditions will vary, and those souls, which will have earthly desires to be a king or emperor, or to have a large fortune, a large family or any other kind of ambition, will have to come down on this plane. They will be born again. So the destiny of the human soul is determined by the thoughts and desires and tendencies. We create our own destiny by our thoughts and desires. What we are today, are the results of our past existence. God is not responsible for our conditions. We ourselves are responsible, and if we understand this secret mystery of the soul, then we can mould our future in such a manner that we

2. Vide Swami Abhedananda : *Path of Realization*, pp. 173-198.

will never go down, but rise higher and higher, until we have reached the goal of our existence.

Those, who perform good deeds and lead a virtuous life, will come down on the human plane, and be born again, until they rise higher in their aspirations and desires, and those that have low tendencies and died in absolute ignorance, will become idiots, subject to suffering and misery for a certain length of time, until the higher perceptions will be opened to them.

So we must try our best to perform good deeds, to build up our characters, and to lead a virtuous life, and then we will enjoy eternal happiness and immortality even in this life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRE-EXISTENCE AND REINCARNATION

Different schools of thought about pre-existence and reincarnation—Dr. Thompson—Non-existence cannot produce existence—What is the cause—Leibnitz—Vedanta philosophy on the soul—Subtle body—Parents do not create the souls—The believers of one-birth theory—Genesis—Buck and Immortality—The believers of one-birth theory—Genesis—Buck and Bethoven — Bethoven — Immortality — Michael Angelo—Memory continues—What is love—Pre-existence and reincarnation go hand in hand.

Most mysterious is the government, concerning life and death of individuals upon this plane. From the very ancient times, philosophers and thinkers of all countries have tried to unravel this great mystery of nature. Again and again it has been asked, why do people come into existence upon this plane for a short time. Some are born and pass out within a few weeks, or a few months, or a few years, without having any opportunity to fulfil all the desires they had, as if they are forced by some external power, to leave this world unexpectedly, before they have completed their desires and experiences. Why is this ? Why do some people come and live for a short time, and others live longer ? Are these all accidental ? Do the souls come here and pass out without any definite purpose and without being governed by any law ? Or is there a law behind all these appearances ? This question rises in our minds, and each individual must solve this problem; otherwise, he or she cannot remain contented. The mind wants solution, because our tendency is to

know. So we must know, and we must solve all the problems of life and death.

When we turn towards different classes of thinkers, we find that there is a class of thinkers, who are known as materialists or scientists or agnostics. They deny the existence of the soul as an intelligent self-conscious entity, but they try to explain everything through the material forces, which are governed by mechanical laws. Some of them have gone so far as to assert that the appearance and disappearance of human beings on this planet are nothing but the results of some fortuitous, or of accidental combination of matter, or of disintegration of material particles, which are caused by the natural process of the evolution of matter. There is no such thing as soul; there is no such thing as purpose of life, as all these are coming accidentally. And these appearances of human bodies or beings, at the time of death, cease to exist. But this explanation does not satisfy the minds of the seekers after truth. The questions are not solved. In the innermost soul of our souls, we know that it is wrong, it is not true, and matter has not produced the intelligence and consciousness. We do not see matter, producing intelligence and consciousness. It would be very difficult for any scientists to prove that the combination of matter or material particles, which are governed by mechanical laws, can produce intelligence and consciousness. On the other hand, it is a scientific truth that motion produces nothing but motion. But the intelligent soul or consciousness is not a motion ; neither is it a result of motion, but

it is something distinct from motion. It is the knower of motion and all activities. Motion produces nothing but motion. It does not produce the knower, who has all the power of translating the molecular activities of the brain cells into sensations, perceptions, ideas, desires, and thoughts. All these are the living properties of a living soul, which functions in the mind. No one has proved that brain creates mind or intelligence, but, on the contrary, the great thinkers of the world have understood the secret truth, concerning the relation between the mind and the brain. For instance, Dr. Thomposon, in his book on *Brain and Personality*, explains that brain is only the instrument, but the personality or the mind, or the intelligent self-conscious entity, is over-shadowing the brain. He compared the brain with a violin. Just as the violin can not produce any music, but it requires a musician, so music is not in the violin, but is in the mind of the musician, and the musician must bring it out, by playing upon the strings, which would touch our souls. Violin itself could not do it. Similarly, the personality is like the musician, who is playing upon the strings of nerves and brain cells from outside, as it were, over-shadowing it and producing harmony of discord. If the musician is not well-trained, well advanced, and well developed, instead of bringing out harmony, he creates discord, just as a child would play upon the violin, instead of producing any music, and would create discord, which would be a very undesirable thing.

In this way, if we analyse, we see that our soul, the self-conscious entity and thinker, is not the result of the activity of the brain cells, but is something distinct and immaterial. But yet it has the power to control and govern all the material forces that are under its dominion. If we understand that there is some entity, which is our real self and possesses all the desires and thoughts and ideas, then we wish to know what is that something that is self-conscious ? Where does it exist ? How does it produce this physical body and organism ? Well, in the first place, if we study nature, we find that the law of causation is inexorable and omnipotent. The law of cause and effect governs everything in this universe. Every effect must have a cause. If we deny the law of causation, we not only deny the truth of nature, but we also destroy the fundamental principle of modern science, which is : Something cannot come out of nothing. Non-existence cannot produce existence, or existence cannot come out of non-existence. If we exist today, we must have had a cause. That cause is something, and not non-existence. In other words, we have not come out of nothing. Applying this truth to the phenomena of life and death, we understand that all the appearances of human beings and animals on this plane have definite causes. Having understood thus far, we want to trace the kind of cause that produces all these human activities or the activities of an intelligent being. What is the cause that produces all these things ? Is that cause outside of ourselves, or is it in us ? This is another

clear understanding of the relation of the cause to the effect is absolutely necessary for the proper solution of any problem that we have to face.

Instead of going into the details of the methods, by which the ultimate scientific truth has been established, let us take it for granted that this scientific truth that the cause of a thing, is not outside of the thing itself, but is in the thing. The cause of a tree is not outside of the tree, but in the tree itself. The cause of a human being is not outside of the human being, but in the human being. So, we do not have to trace the cause outside of us. In other words, the cause is the unmanifested state of the effect, and the effect is the manifested state of the cause. The whole tree remains in the seed in an invisible state i.e., in a potential form. The environments only give the favourable conditions, under which what is latent in the seed, becomes actual and real and manifested. The environments do not give any of the powers to the seed, which were not already there. The environments simply give the proper conditions. If we understand this clearly, then we find that the environments do not create, but the creative power is in the seed itself. And that seed does not manifest the causal state, until it has taken the form of the tree. Now apply this truth to the human being or to its manifestation. If the cause is in us, then what is that cause? That cause must be something which contains all the peculiarities, which a human being can manifest in his lifetime. The cause retains all the potentialities of the forces and powers of the mind, of thought, of desire, and

intelligence, just as the seed of an oak tree contains all the peculiarities of an oak tree. Those conditions or powers, which are latent in the seed of an oak tree, cannot be changed by the environments, but they will become manifested into an oak tree and not in a chestnut tree. This is a real fact. Therefore, the causal state of a human being will manifest in the future, and that causal state is invisible, just as we do not see in a seed all the latent tree that is already there. The seed of a banyan tree, for instance, is as small as a mustard seed, and if it is given to you, you would not know what it is, but it contains a gigantic banyan tree which will cover the area of a mile in circumference and will produce, perhaps, seventy-five or a hundred trunks of one tree. There is such a tree in the Botanical Garden near Calcutta. One tree covers an area of a mile, and has seventy-five trunks. It shoots the roots, which afterwards grow into the trunks of the tree. That gigantic tree, which would last for thousands of years, like one of the big trees here in Mariposa Grove, is contained in that seed. No other seed will produce that. All the peculiarities of a banyan tree are in that seed. Similarly, the invisible germ, which you may call an amoeba or bioplasm or protoplasm, and which will afterwards appear as a human being, contains all the potentialities of that human being in the invisible state. If we deny this, then we run the risk of committing that blunder that something has come out of nothing. But the scientific truth is, as understood by scientists, that whatever exists in the end, existed also in the

beginning. If, in the end, we find a human being like Abraham Lincoln, or Shakespeare, or Plato, then the germ, or the seed form which has manufactured that particular manifestation, contained all those powers in an invisible state. That is the germ. You may call it a germ, or you may call it by any other name. Names do not make much differences. Leibnitz called it Monad. Scientists call it germ of life. The Vedānta philosophy calls it subtle body. The subtle bodies are the invisible germs or nucleus, which contains mind, intelligence, reasoning, power of thinking, will power, and all the senses, i. e. the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, and so forth. All these powers are there. It also contains the impressions of previous manifestation, and those impressions are embedded in that substance. That substance is etherial or electric i. e., the minute particles of matter, which are held together by that force, which is called life-force or vital energy.

Now, this subtle being is the real man. It appears in the form of a human body, which it manufactures and lives in. Just as an oyster or a crab would manufacture a shell as a dwelling-house, so this germ of life or the subtle body of the individual, whether it is a human or an animal, takes only the form, according to its desires, or according to its tendencies. The human germ of life will manufacture a human body, and, if it desires to be of any particular animal form, then it manufactures that form. It has no particular form, but it can take any form. This subtle body contains everything. So, we do not gain any-

thing from out-side. It is already there. It has infinite potentialities and infinite possibilities.

At the time of death, the individual germ of life contracts all its forces, powers, and all these are centralized into a nucleus, and that nucleus retains the life, the mind, the powers of senses, and all the impressions and experiences that the individual has gathered. Then, in the course of time, when the favourable conditions come, it manufactures another form. Parents are nothing but the principal channels, through which these germs of life or subtle bodies find proper conditions of to manufacture a human being by obeying the laws of nature. Parents do not create the soul. In fact, the parents cannot give birth to a child according to their will. It would be an absolute impossibility. Unless the soul comes to them and nourishes the germ, it would be an absolute impossibility. These subtle bodies are like the water globules. As a water globule may remain in the form of water in the ocean, so it may go up and become invisible in a vapoury state in a cloud and then come down again in the form of a drop of rain. Then it may remain again in mud, or it may be frozen into a solid substance which you can handle the form of a solid substance, or you can the form of a piece of ice. But it is never destroyed. It may become invisible or visible. These conditions do not change the globule of water. It is there, and this globule of water of the subtle body arises in the beginningless past in the ocean of eternal life, and retains the reflection of the supreme spirit in

the form of intelligence. It may appear on this earth, or it may go to another planet. It has the power to travel with the speed of light. It can follow the way of light from one planet to another with vibrations or waves of ether. It can shoot out instantaneously. It has such a power. And this subtle body may remain on this plane in the human form. Then, after death, it might go to heaven or to some other planet, or remain in an invisible state until the proper conditions and suitable environments are found. Then it gravitates according to their desires. This whole process is governed by law, and this law is called the law of reincarnation or remanifestation of the subtle form in the gross physical form. This law is inexorable. No matter what we want to do, or whether we admit its existence or not, it is working, just the same. The same forces, which have brought us here this time, will bring us here again, Who can stop it? Your will or my will would not stop it, until we understand this law, outgrow it, and go beyond it. So you may think that we deny it or we do not want to believe such stuff. Well, the ignorant fool may say that we do not believe in gravitation, and deny its existence, but still his whole being is held up by the force of gravity. He could not live without it. The molecules of his body would fly asunder, if there were no force of gravity to hold it together. He could not live on the surface of the earth, if he were not held down by the force of gravity. Still, he can deny it. But his denial amounts to nothing, and simply betrays his own

ignorance, that he does not understand the law. In the same way, anyone, who denies reincarnation, betrays his own ignorance, because he does not know the law.

Those, who do not believe in reincarnation believe in the one-birth theory. Two great religions, Judaism, with its off-shoots Christianity and Mohammedanism, and Zoroastrianism, rather believe in the theory of one birth, and try to explain all the inequalities and diversities, which we find among us. But they do not succeed. They believe that the souls of the individuals have been created out of nothing for the first time, and some of them tell us that they will continue to exist for ever. Now, how is it possible that anything that has a beginning at one end, will continue to exist for ever at the other ? It is absurd. It is an absolute impossibility. Anything that has a beginning, must have an end. If you believe that the individual souls that have been created out of nothing for the first time, will continue to live for ever, then you have to admit that these souls were not created out of nothing, but they existed before. In Genesis, you read in the first chapter that God created man after His own image. In the second chapter, you read that He made man out of the dust of the earth, and blew the breath of life into his nostrils. There are the two statements. There were two stories, which were prevalent amongst the Phoenicians of ancient times, and the ancient Jews. The writer of Genesis accepted those two stories and put them together in the chapters. But the two ideas are radically opposed. Which will you accept ?

But, if God created man after His own image, how did He create him ? Well the second said, that God created him out of the dust of the earth. But it should be remember that earth is the material insentient matter, and so it does not explain how the breath of life came into existence. All these difficulties, that arise in our minds after studying these statements, cannot be solved in any other way, unless we accept the idea that the spirit or intelligence or consciousness was never created, but the body was created or manufactured through the process of evolution. As the breath of life was never created, so the mind and soul were never created, but the soul retains the image of the Lord or the Spirit. In other words, as Vedanta explains, it contains the reflection of the supreme Spirit that is all intelligence. We cannot explain anything by the theory of one birth or creation of the soul out of nothing, because, if God creates the soul out of nothing, why does He make so many varieties of characters ? Some are born to enjoy and to show their genius, and wonderful talents. Others are kept to manifest nothing but ignorance and other weaknesses. How can you explain those things ? A person may have five children. One might be a murderer, another might be a genius, another might be an artist, and so on. What makes all these inequalities and diversities ? If God creates each one separately at the time of the birth of the body, then who is to be held responsible ? Not the parents, but God Himself. Why could not He do better ? That ques-

tion must rise in our minds, and we must try to find the solution.

Then another question rises : why do children come into life to live only for a short time, for a few days, or weeks ? Why do they pass away without gaining any opportunity to rearn anything, or gain experience in this vast world of phenomena ? Who is responsible and what becomes of those children ? Well, there might be a theory that they would go to heaven, and enjoy eternal life. Those, who could believe in that story, it is better to pray for the death of their children, before they commit any more harm, and thank the Lord that their little bodies are covered by the grave. I would do that, if I had little children and believed in such a thing. Why should they go through all these miseries and troubles ? If we could go to heaven straight by dying in childhood, we would rather die than live. So, this theory does not explain anything, but makes it appear to us as absurd and irrational. Then, if you admit the theory of predestination and grace, that also does not help us very much. If we are predestined and pre-ordained to do these things, and if a murderer is pre-ordained to murder some body and before he had any will, it was all arranged by the Creator, then why should we hang the murderer ? We should hang the Creator because He is responsible. Therefore we cannot find any solution.

Then, there is another creed of heredity. Does heredity explain all these inequalities and diversities ? No, it cannot. How can heredity explain the cases

of prodigies and geniuses ? Take the case of the young Polish boy, who is a great chess player. He is only eight years old. He is now in New York, I think. He began to play chess, when he was five years old, and has beaten all the greatest experts and champions of London and Paris, after playing thirty-three games at a time and defeating them all. What mind power does he possess ? He has brothers and sisters. They are not uncommon. Neither are the parents in any way uncommon. He is the only one. How can heredity explain that ? Take the case of Goethe, the great German poet. He was an octogenarian poet and philosopher. When he was ten, he was master of Greek and sixteen other language. There is a Frenchman now in Columbia who knows more than a dozen languages. He knows more than his teacher can teach him. The theory of heredity cannot explain these cases of prodigies and geniuses. But there is another theory that would explain them. Whatever a person has manifested in this life, he had it at the time of his birth from the very beginning ; that is, he gained the power in his previous life. So any talent or genius is only the expression of all that was developed in the particular soul. I saw a girl, who was six years old in New York City. She could play the piano, Bach and Bethoven and all the difficult music with such an ease and such a perfection that you would be surprised. She could hardly span the octave, and yet she was playing this rapid music with most wonderful expression. Her mother was with her, and she was not a musician. Her father was never a

a musician. How do you explain that ? Heredity cannot explain. But we can explain that theory easily. Because this child was a musician, and the soul of this child was a musician in her previous incarnation, and now she has manufactured another form with a little brain. Her brain is not developed enough to understand such music, but the musician is overshadowing the brain and manipulating all these strings of brain and nerve cells and producing all this wonderful music. That is the only rational explanation.

If we deny the pre-existence of the soul, we cannot explain immortality. Immortality does not mean that it has a beginning at one end and endless existence at the other. Pre-existence explains the continuity of life in the past, and immortality explains the continuity of life in the future. Immortality means an eternal life. You cannot accept one-half and deny the other half, because each would be incomplete. So, the complete soul life means eternal past and eternal future. The soul was never born and never created out of nothing. It is the grandest theory, and it is satisfying. It is comforting that we have not come into existence out of nothing, but we have everything in the beginning. If we are images of God, then we possess all the powers. God was not a substance that came into existence suddenly like a mushroom, but He is eternal, and naturally our life i.e. soul-life must be as eternal as God's life. In fact, we are parts and parcels of God. In this way, if we understand how great and grand and beautiful

we are, we do not have to accept any such idea that after death we will discontinue to live. But on the contrary, we can say that so long as we have desires and those desires that are to be fulfilled on the human plane under our present conditions, we will come back to this plane. If our desires change, we will go to other planes. For instance, if I have a desire to become an artist like Michael Angelo, and if I in this life cannot become a Michael Angelo and still possess the desire in my soul, do you think that desire will have no fulfilment or manifestation? Nothing will stop the fulfilment of that desire, because that desire will bring me back to the proper environments and other conditions, where I will gravitate and then start from my childhood with a tendency to become an artist. Nothing can stop me, and I will continue so long as that desire is strong. I will continue until I become a master artist. And that is the law of nature. So, whatever desire we possess, if that desire be strong, then that desire will mould our future, create our destiny, and make us accordingly.

This idea has been given in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* :

'Whatsoever desire is very strong during the lifetime, becomes predominant at the time of death, and that desire moulds the creation of the subtle body of the individual and that determines the future of the individual.'¹

So, that gives us an opportunity to find out what we shall be in future. We will make our future by

1. यं यं वापि स्मरण भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥

our thoughts and desires. If you desire to be a great politician, you will be a great politician. If you desire to be a great saviour, you will be a great saviour. If you desire to be a great artist, you will be a great artist. In fact, you live in the eternity. Do not despair. If you cannot be a great artist in this life, there are hundreds of lives coming to you, till you get that desire. And, when one set of desires is fulfilled, another will spring up. As each individual soul possesses infinite potentialities and possibilities, so it can express an infinite variety of manifestation. Because we are all eternal and are parts of the Infinite.

The idea of pre-existence of soul and reincarnation has settled the questions and solved the problems of life and death amongst the ancient philosophers like Plato, Pythagoras and the Neo-Platonists ; among the poets, like Wordsworth Tennyson, Walt Whitman and others. Walt Whitman said :

‘As to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings of many death. No doubt I have died myself ten thousand time before’.

He learned this truth through the study of Vedanta, just as Emerson learned the belief in reincarnation from the study of Vedanta. And it is also true that there is no other philosophy which manifests this idea so strongly as Vedanta does. Of course, Plato and Pythagoras got their ideas through Persia and Egypt from India. The Hindus understood the secret of this law of pre-existence and reincarnation even at the dawn of human civilization on the earth. That idea spread among the early Christians until

the time of Justinian, who anathematized all those and belived in this idea, in the Council of Constantinople in 638 A.D. He said,

‘Whoever believes in this wonderful doctrine of pre-existence of the soul, let him be anathema’.

The churches from that time, have not accepted, although it is in the old Testament as well as in the New Testament. It does not preserve their scheme of salvation. But outside of orthodox people, there are millions of people in the world, who find comfort, like the Buddhists, Japanese, Hindus, and poets and thinkers of all countries.

Therefore, it is the rational solution, and it explains all the causes of inequalities and diversities and the appearance of the prodigies. Heredity or theory of one-birth, as explained by the orthodox theologians, does not explain or solve the problem of life. Now, you may have noticed that there are persons who cannot accept this theory of pre-existence and reincarnation, because they cannot remember. They say, well, if we existed before, why do we not remember what we did ourselves? Do you remember what you did in your childhood? Would you say you did not exist then, because you cannot remember? Certainly not. What you did, when you were a child? All the existence you have gone through, and the details have passed out of your memory, but the knowledge, you have gathered through those experiences, is part and parcel of your being, and that has shaped you as you are. Memory is of short duration, and it is sometimes powerful and sometimes very weak.

But modern Spiritualism has thrown a different light on this subject. It says that the souls that have passed out remember their relatives, remember the conditions, under which they passed. So the memory continues. Take the case of Raymond, the son of Sir Oliver Lodge. He remembered everything, how he died and so on, and he communicated to his father and mother, and told them. So, that shows that we retain our memory even. But the instruments, the brain and the nervous system are destroyed. Therefore the memory is not the product of the function of the brain, but it is a power of the mind, which we retain so long as there would be the mind. However, the memory is not so important. Now, if we do remember our past, we might make bad use of our present. Therefore it is not desirable. Suppose somebody knows or understands his past; and knows that he has committed wicked deeds, and he is going to suffer for it, and he would be constantly thinking of that. He would lose all these opportunities, and make a bad use of his present. He would not be able to do any work properly. He would be worrying about how to avoid that misfortune that is coming. He would not be able to sleep even, or eat a good meal. Therefore, Vedanta philosophy tells us, do not think of the past, but try to mould your future, mould your present so that you can make your future better. Of course, there is a method, by which we can remember our past, because all the experiences that we have gained during our lifetime, are stored up in our subliminal or subconscious mind, where all these impressions are

pigeon-holed. We can bring them out, if we focus our intelligence upon any particular branch of the experience, which we like to remember. Now there are cases again, like two lovers who fall in love at the first sight. There we can explain that these souls loved before, and naturally they remember that, and feel as if they had met each other. And what is love? Love does not mean any passion. It means the attraction of two souls, It is not on the physical plane, but must be on the soul-plane, because love is God. It is the divine force; it is the divine attraction of two souls. If there be pure love between any man and woman, that pure love will continue to hold them together even after the death of the body, because the body cannot interfere. But at the same time we must remember that love must be mutual. If the husband loves the wife and the wife loves the husband truly and unselfishly, then that love is mutual. But, if you love somebody and that somebody loves somebody else, then there would be no meeting again, until both were attracted to each other. Therefore it is necessary to develop that kind of love, which would be mutual, and then that love will hold the lover and the beloved together throughout eternity. There is no separation in it. So you need not be afraid of being separated from your beloved, and if your beloved be born again, after you go from this plane, you will be born again, and you will come together unexpectedly, and enjoy the beautiful effects of pure and divine love.

Therefore, if we study this carefully, we see that

pre-existence and reincarnation go hand in hand, and they explain all the difficulties and problems of life and death as well as of existence, and also that we are the creators of our own destiny. Our present life is the resultant of our past, and our future will be the resultant of our present. Whether we remember or not, that does not make any difference. We are subject to this eternal law. But there are souls who can remember. If we rise on the height of our spiritual consciousness, we can see our past and future, just as if it were eternally present. Therefore, Krishna said to Arjuna :

'Oh Arjuna, both you and I have passed through many births. You know them not, but I remember them all.'¹

So, anyone, who reaches that state of superconsciousness develops a sight. By developing that sight, one can see the past and future, and remember all the experiences that one has gone through all the experiences that one will go through. And when he understands that life is eternal, he does not worry about the conditions, the failures and successes, or discases or sufferings, of this earthly plane. This life on this plane is only for a short time, but from the standpoint of eternal life, we are never born, and we are never going to die. Because we are birthless, deathless, eternal, immortal, and part and parcel of the infinite spirit, which is worshipped under different names among different races.

1. Vide *Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch. IV. 5.



The photograph of the Spirit
(The hands of the Spirit are seen upon the
left hand of the Medium)



The Spirit-photo, without light.



CHAPTER EIGHT

PRE-EXISTENCE AND IMMORTALITY

Immortality is one of the fundamental principles of philosophy and religion of Vedanta—The orthodox view of the Christian theologians—Conception of immortality of Vedanta differs from that of Christianity—The laws of nature—Pre-existence of the soul—The immortality according to Vedanta—Raja Yoga and pre-existence—The subconscious mind is the storehouse of all the impressions—Dormant impressions mould our characters—Persons who are born with some wonderful powers—The word *love*—Vedanta and immortality—Modern Spiritualism—Rebirth and reincarnation of the soul—Reward and punishment of the soul after death depend upon its thoughts and deeds—Vedanta and heaven.


One of the fundamental principles of philosophy and religion of Vedanta is the immortality of the human soul. According to the teachings of Vedanta, each individual soul is immortal by nature. However sinful it may appear to be from the moral standpoint, it will continue to exist after death of the body. It cannot be annihilated or destroyed into nothingness. It can never cease to exist.

On this point, the religion of Vedanta differs from the dogmas of those dualistic religions, which maintain that immortal life can be obtained only by a few chosen ones as a special gift of God, while others will perish. Many of the orthodox Christian theologians hold that the souls, continued life after death in eternal future, is not a natural gift, but a special one, being conditioned upon the proper use of this life. They think that immortality is a reward of merit, or of good works, or of an ethical life, or of faith in the Christ. Here we may ask, who will

decide how many degrees above zero one must be, moral, in order to obtain the gift of immortality ?

If we examine minutely we shall find that this dogma of conditional immortality is not based upon a rational foundation. It makes God, the merciful Father, partial and unjust. How can we imagine that a just, impartial and merciful Father will grant immortality to some of His children and allow the rest to perish, simply on account of their immoral acts or mistakes ? The religion of Vedanta does not teach this dogma of conditional immortality, but, on the contrary, it says that immortal life cannot be a reward or a gift of any superior being, because that reward or punishment is nothing but the result or reaction of our own actions ; and since every human action is finite or limited by time and space, and consequently non-eternal, it cannot produce an eternal effect in the form of immortal life. No human action, either of the mind or of the body, however good or virtuous it may be called, can produce an eternal effect, that is, an effect unlimited by time or space. It will then be against the law of cause and sequence, which makes every effect or result similar to its cause, both in nature and in quality.

There is another important point, on which the conception of immortality in Vedanta differs from that of Christianity. Christianity, believing in the theory of special creation of the individual soul at the time of birth, denies the pre-existence of the human soul, previous to the birth of the body ; yet it admits the continuity of the soul after death in an eternal future. This doctrine again is not based upon



a rational foundation, nor is it supported by any fact of nature, because it is impossible for a thing, which has a beginning in time to last for ever. No one has ever seen or heard of any substance, which began to exist at a certain time, but continued for ever in future. Can we imagine a stick, the one end of which is in our hand and the other end is endless and unlimited ? No, it is impossible. We cannot think of a thing, which has a beginning or a limit either in time or in space on one side, and on the other side, is unlimited by either time or space. As we cannot imagine any earthly object or material thing of such a nature, how can we imagine that the soul, which had its birth in time and space, will continue to exist for ever ? We cannot conceive of a soul, which came into existence at the time of birth, will remain for ever after death in eternal future, or in endless time. Therefore, immortality, which means the eternal continuity of existence, presupposes the existence of the soul, previous to the birth of the body. If we believe in the immortality of the human soul, we shall have to admit its pre-existence also, because that which is born, must die, and everything that has a beginning, must have an end. This is the law of nature. We cannot go against it.

The laws of nature are always uniform and universal. There is no such thing as an exception. All exceptions are governed by other laws, which we may or may not know ; they are only the expressions of different laws. Anything that is born, must be subject to death, and that which has a beginning,

must have an end. If we wish to be endless or immortal in future, we must have to admit that we were beginningless or immortal in the past. Here some people may think : how is it possible that we existed in the past ? If we apply the law that because we exist today, we could not come into existence out of nothing, then we will get a glimpse of the idea of pre-existence. And, for this reason, Vedanta teaches both immortality and pre-existence. No theory of immortality can be perfect or complete without admitting the pre-existence of the soul. No theory has successfully proved the necessity of an eternal future life in the case of one, whose existence in the past has been proved to be unnecessary. If you say that your pre-existence was unnecessary, so your immortal life will be equally unnecessary. If the world could get along without you before, why should it not get along without you hereafter ? What necessity will there be for an immortal life in future, if you did not exist before ? If you have come into existence all on a sudden, you can go out of existence all on a sudden. Who will prevent us from becoming such an ephemeral substance ?

In Vedanta, true immortality means eternal existence in the past as well as in the future. Pre-existence and immortality are so closely related to each other that if we deny one, we cannot accept the other. For logically, we shall be incorrect ; we shall go against the laws of nature, and our statement will be founded, not upon rational ground, but upon some dogma or doctrine, which has no foundation. In Vedanta, therefore, we learn that each individual

soul existed before the birth of the body. If we believe that we shall continue to exist after death, we shall have to admit that we existed in the past, otherwise, we cannot have immortal life in future. We have not come into existence for the first time out of nothing, but our present is a connecting link in the chain of our past and future existences. We may not know it, we may not possess the memory of our past lives, but still we existed just the same.

Here it may be asked, if we existed before our birth, why do we not remember ? This is one of the strongest objections often raised against the belief in pre-existence. Some people deny the existence of the soul in the past, simply because they cannot remember the events of the past. Others again, who hold memory as the standard of existence, say, if our memory of the present ceases to exist at the time of death, with it we shall also cease to be ; we cannot be immortal ; because they hold that memory is the standard of life, and if we do not remember, then why we are not the same beings ?

Vedanta answers these questions, by saying that it is possible for us to remember our previous existences. Those who have read Rāja Yoga, will recall the aphorism :

'By perceiving the *samskaras* one acquires the knowledge of past lives.'¹

Here the *samskāras* mean the impressions of the past experience, which lie dormant in our subliminal self, and are never lost. Memory is nothing but the

1. Vide *Patanjala-darsana*, 3-18.

awakening and rising of latent impressions above the threshold of consciousness. A Rāja Yogi, through powerful concentration upon these dormant impressions of the subconscious mind, can remember all the events of his past lives. There have been many instances of the Indian Yogis, who could know not only their own past lives, but correctly tell those of others. It is said that Buddha remembered five hundred of his previous births. Krishna says, in the *Bhagavad Gtīā* :

'Both thou and I, Arjuna, have gone through many births ; thou knowest them not ; but I know them all.'²

This shows that Krishna remembered them, because he was a Yogi, and Arjuna could not remember because he had not the power to do so.

Our subliminal self or the subconscious mind, is the store-house of all the impressions that we gather through our experiences during our life-time. They are stored up or pigeon-holed there in the *chitta*, as it is called in Vedānta. *Chitta* means the same subconscious mind or subliminal self, which is the store-house of all impressions and experiences. And these impressions remain latent, until favourable conditions rouse them and bring them out in the plane of consciousness. Here let us take an illustration : In a dark room, pictures are thrown on a screen by lantern-slides. The room is absolutely dark. We are looking at the picture. Suppose we open a window, and allow the rays of the midday sun to fall upon the screen. Would we be able to see those pic-

tures ? No, because the more powerful flood of light will subdue the light of the lantern and the pictures. But, although they are invisible to our eyes, yet we cannot deny their existence on the screen. Similarly, the pictures of the events of our previous lives upon the screen of the subliminal self may be invisible to us at present, but they exist there. Why are they invisible to us now ? Because the powerful light of sense-consciousness has subdued them. If we close the windows and door of our senses from outside contact and darken the inner chamber of our self, then, by focusing the light of consciousness and concentrating the mental rays, we shall be able to know and remember our past lives as well as the events and experiences thereof. Those, who wish to develop their memory and remember their past, should practise Rāja Yoga, and learn the method of acquiring the power of concentration, by shutting the doors and windows of their senses. That power of concentration must be helped by the power of self-control, that is, by controlling the doors and windows of our own senses.

These dormant impressions, whether we remember them or not, are the chief factors in moulding our individual characters, with which we are born, and they are the causes of the inequalities and diversities which we find around us. When we study the characters and powers of geniuses and prodigies, we cannot deny the pre-existence of the soul. Whatever the soul has mastered in a previous life, manifests in the présent. If we possess the wisdom and knowledge, which we gathered in our previous lives, then

it matters very little, whether or not we remember the particular events or the struggles, which we went through in order to gain that knowledge. Those particular things may not come to us in our memory, but we have not lost the wisdom. Now, study your own present life, and you will see that in this life, you have gained some experience. The particular events and struggles, which you went through, are passing out of your memory, but the knowledge, which you have gained through that experience, has moulded your character and has shaped you in a different manner. You will not have to go through those different events again to remember: how you acquired that experience is not necessary, and the wisdom gained is quite enough.

Then, again, we find among ourselves persons, who are born with some wonderful powers, Take, for instance, the power of self-control. One is born with the power of self-control highly developed, and that self-control may not be acquired by another after years of hard struggle. Why is there this difference ? Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was born with with Godconsciousness, and he went into the highest state of *samādhi*; when he was four years old. But this state is very difficult for other Yogis to acquire. There was a Yogi, who came to see Sri Rāmakrishna. He was an old man, and possessed wonderful powers, and he said : 'I have struggled for forty years to acquire that state which is natural with you. Sankarācārya, the great commentator of the Vedānta philosophy, wrote his commentary when he was twelve years of age. There are very few thinkers

and philosophers in the world, who can understand the spirit of his writings. They are so deep and sublime that ordinary minds cannot grasp them. There are many such instances which show that pre-existence is a fact, and that these latent or dormant impressions of previous lives are the chief factors in moulding the individual character without depending upon the memory of the past, because we cannot remember our past. But, because of the loss of memory of the particular events, the soul's progress is not arrested. The soul will continue to progress further and further, even though the memory may be weak.

Each individual soul possesses the store-house of previous experiences in the background. in the subconscious mind. Take the instance of two lovers. Now what is love ? It is the attraction between two souls. This love does not die with the death of the body. True love survives after death, and continues to grow, becomes stronger and stronger. Eventually it brings the two souls together, and makes them one. The theory of pre-existence alone can explain why two souls at the first sight know each other and become attached to each other by the tie of friendship. This mutual love will continue to grow, and will become stronger, and in the end, will bring these lovers together no matter where they go. Therefore, Vedanta does not say that the death of the body will end the attraction of the attachment of two souls, but as the souls are immortal, their relation will continue for ever. But we must not forget that relation and love must

be mutual. If you love some one and that person does not love you, then it will be one-sided. It will not bring the two souls together. There must be a mutual attraction. In Vedanta, we learn that as immortality means the continued existence in eternal future, so pre-existence means the continued existence in the eternal past. The one cannot exist without the other. Each of these only expresses the one half of our soul-life, which is eternal, and both of these together make a complete whole, and that is the eternal soul-life. It existed before, and it was always unborn, and, therefore, it will continue to exist in future for ever. Our present life is the resultant of the past, and our future will be the resultant of the present. Nothing will be lost.

Modern spiritualism has thrown a little light upon the future that even the departed spirits do remember their past relations. This shows that memory does not depend entirely upon the physical organism, but goes with the soul, wherever the soul goes. That is the real memory. The physical organism may be destroyed, but memory lives. It is the body, through which the subliminal self is reproducing powers, which are latent in it. So our present life is the resultant of the past. It contains all the previous impressions and experiences of past lives only under certain conditions they can be remembered. But here we must remember that immortality does not necessarily imply that we should go to heaven to eternally enjoy the celestial pleasures, or to go to eternal of our evil deeds. These ideas are not necessarily included in the meaning of immortality. According to

Vedanta, immortality includes the meaning of progress, i.e. of growth and evolution of the soul from lower to higher stages of development. It also includes the idea that each individual soul will manifest the powers, which are already latent in the soul, by going through different stages of growth and development, until perfection and omniscience and omnipresence are acquired. In order to attain to this, and to accomplish this highest end, the soul must manifest itself in various stages of life, and gain experience after experience. That cause, which brought us on the plane of existence, will continue to bring us here again in future. If the same cause remains in us even after the death of the body, then nothing can prevent us from coming back to this plane of existence, in order to fulfil our desires and purposes. This idea leads to the theory of rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul. The rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul is based upon the truth of the eternality of the soul-life, which is expressed by pre-existence and immortality. The exodus, of the soul after death into heaven or into some realm of punishment or lower realm depends entirely upon the thoughts and deeds of the individual soul, and the soul's stay in these realms is temporary and dependent upon the condition of reaping the results of those thoughts and deeds. That is, the soul will remain there as long as it has not thoroughly reaped the fruits of its thoughts and deeds. At the expiration of that time, the inmates of heavens and other realms will come back on this plane, in order to gain further experience and

more powers and knowledge, until perfection is reached. Vedanta does not say that heaven is eternal, but the soul has the power to transcend heaven, and go beyond all celestial realms. Why should we be limited to one particular spot? If we do not care to return to this realm, we shall be dissatisfied even, when we have gone to heaven. Then will come the time, when we shall try to go further beyond, until we have become absolutely perfect and omniscient and omnipresent. Therefore, it is said in Vedanta :

‘Even the highest heaven is temporary and non-eternal. The realms that exist between the earth and the highest heaven, mark only the phenomenal growth and progress of the individual souls. Those, who go there and remain there, are subject to birth and rebirth. They, will come back again. But those who have attained to perfection transcend all heavens, understand eternal life and remain perfect for ever and ever.’³

3. Cf. *Bhagavad Gita*, VIII, 16-27.

CHAPTER NINE

SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY

The popular belief in Christendom—The ancient records in Egypt—The belief among the pious Christians—Jesus the Christ did not bring the idea of immortality of the soul for the first time—Zend Avesta and immortality—What is death—Science and death—Christian theologians and death—The meaning of *immortality*—Physical bodies are subject to change—Everything is in vibration—Analysis of the conception of pleasure—What lies in the gross description of hell and heaven—What is *personality*—A finite cause can never produce an infinite result—God cannot change the laws—The law of *karma*—There is one universal law—The materialists—Modern scientists—What is soul—Christian Scientists—The knower and the changing states of consciousness—The books will not reveal the Truth—Raja Yoga and concentration—What the scriptures of the Hindus say.

The popular belief in Christendom is that Jesus the Christ brought eternal life and immortality to light, and that immortality cannot be obtained except through him, as if this conception of eternal life or eternal life after death, which is understood by immortality, did not exist before the advent of the illustrious Son of Man. But the students of comparative religions find that in ancient times, long before the Christian era, this same conception of eternal or immortal life existed among the ancient nations like the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Hindus, and other different branches of the Aryan nation, such as Zoroastrians, the ancient Greeks, Romans, Scandinavians, and so on.

If we study the most ancient records in Egypt, which go back between 12000 and 8000 B.C., we shall find in those earliest records that the ancient Egyptians had a belief in the resurrection of the body as

well as in eternal life for those who were righteous. The crude idea of the resurrection of the body was afterwards rejected by the priests and speculators in Egypt, when the idea of a 'double' or soul, as independent of the gross material body, developed. But the ignorant masses kept up the belief in the resurrection of the material or corruptible body, just as we find today it is upheld by the majority of believers in orthodox Christianity. The ignorant classes cannot believe that the soul can be separated from the body and can live without the body. They believe that the soul clings to body. Attachment to the gross material form is so great that we can not think for a moment that we can do without the body or can exist without this material form, which we have clothed with so much care, and which we have kept up with beautiful things, and nice dishes, and so on.

Among the writings of the old Egyptians, who lived in the fifth dynasty, that is, in 400 B.C., we find such expressions as,

The soul to heaven, the body to eart ;

The eaven hath thy soul the earth thy body.

You will have to remember that 3500 years before the birth of Christ, such expressions were uttered and written down by the thinkers of Egypt, and these ancient Egyptians believed that the souls of the righteous would go to heaven, enjoy celestial pleasures, and would eat and drink ; because they would have a light, active and ethereal body, and, therefore, they needed food and drink. That was their conception, and it was for that reason the relatives

and friends of the deceased used to put food in the grave, and sometimes they would place amulets, and other charms in the graves, believing that the departed ones might need such things to attract themselves against the evil influences. And, again, in some other writings, we find that the souls of the deceased would go to heaven, and they were apparently in white linen, they wore white sandals on their feet, they walked in the fields of peace, sat with gods, and ate the food of light. There were canals, water courses, roads, boats, chariots, horses, and the duplicates of all these things, which we find on this plane in heaven, and the enjoyment of all these pleasures and comforts, lasting throughout eternity, was the meaning of immortality, according to these ancient Egyptians. They believed that the souls of these departed ones would go to heaven, and enjoy all these celestial pleasures, the highest ideals of pleasures we can enjoy on this plane, which became eternal, and the enjoyment of these pleasures throughout eternity was the meaning they gave to immortality. We must remember that by 'eternity' we do not mean a million or a thousand million years, but a time without end. Can you grasp the meaning of eternity, a time without end, enjoying these pleasures? A similar belief we find among the ancient Greeks in the Elysium fields. The Greeks believed that the righteous ones, who went to the Elysium fields, would continue to enjoy celestial pleasures throughout eternity. Each of the deceased ones would resume the pleasures, and occupations, in which they delighted during their earthly career. And such a belief prevails

among Swedenborgians and other churches, even to this day. Not long ago a clergyman of the city of New York wrote an article in a newspaper, in which he said :

‘The activities of our beings on this earth will be the activities of our beings in heaven. We cannot change this ; it cannot be changed, but we must find and look for such occupations. In whatever form of existence, we can conceive of the occupations of life, must shadow and type the occupations of heaven, and in nobler and in higher forms, we must go on doing what we are doing today on this earth.’

If this remark be true, I would like to know how many of our cooks, waitresses, lawyers, bell-boys and street cleaners would like to continue the same work throughout eternity and without having an end of time ! I would like to know how many would like to go on doing them ?

Among the pious Christians, we find the belief that the enjoyments of heaven, and the conception of eternal life are connected with a belief that the everlasting playing upon a harp would be the principal occupation in heaven. There is a hymn, which used to be sung in the churches, and it gives a description of the heavenly enjoyments, where the Sabbaths never end.

So we see that before the time of Christ there was a belief in eternal life among the Chaldeans, Egyptians and Greeks. Among the Chinese, among the Hindus, and among the Zoroastrians, we find a similar belief in eternal life and celestial pleasures in heaven. So when we examine the dogma of the Christian theologians that Jesus the Christ brought to light for the first time immortal life, we stop and ask the question whether it is true or not ? Jesus the Christ

might have enlightened certain tribes among the Jews, who did not believe in a life hereafter, or the life after death, but he did not bring that idea to the world for the first time ; and even the crude idea of resurrection after death, which prevailed among the Jews at the time of Christ, was taken from the Parsees during the Babylonian Captivity (586-538 B. C.). If we read the Zend Avesta, we shall find that each individual, howsoever good or wicked he may be, must resurrect on the third day after death, and then must go to heaven, or to some place of punishment. That idea prevailed among the Jews. The Pharisees accepted it; the Sadducees rejected it, and the other class of orthodox Jews repudiated it.

So we find, by studying the other religions of the world, that this belief was not introduced for the first time, but has come to mean the eternal life in heaven. But yet the question of immortality is a very difficult problem. Most of the thinkers and metaphysicians of the world have tried to solve this problem of immortality. Some of them have arrived at certain conclusions, which are either for or against the existence of eternal life after death. But, if we analyse the meaning of the word immortality, we know that it means deathlessness ; that is, that state which is not subject to death. Then come the question : what is death ? If, by death we mean destruction, annihilation, and absolute dissolution universe into nothingness, then there is no one in this world, who is subject to such a death or annihilation. Science has proved that matter as well as force is indestructible. So every particle of matter,

however minute or gross it may be, is not subject to absolute destruction or death ; and in that sense, we must say that matter is immortal, force is immortal and energy is immortal, because they are not subject to either destruction or annihilation. The old gross conception of death is that it is a kind of sleep. The spirit or soul goes into unconsciousness at the time of death, and in that slumber of unconsciousness, the soul remains until the morning of resurrection, when it is again combined with the body. Both body and soul go to heaven or to hell, awaiting the judgment of the merciful Father. Death was regarded by the Christian theologians as the greatest enemy of mortals, and it meant the doom of the soul throughout all eternity. The good soul remained good forever, and the wicked suffered throughout all eternity. That dreary conception of death still prevails among a certain class of Christian believers, and the horror and despair also permeate the atmosphere of the sacred shrines under the vaults of holy places, and people tremble with fear, when they think of the approach of death. Because it stamps, fixes the doom of the individual soul, and stereotypes the individual so that it lasts for ever. Again the wicked man, who has no religion, will have to suffer throughout eternity. Now, science has opened our eyes to the fact that death is not such an evil. The science says that death is not an enemy, attacking life, and we cannot live without dying, and death is also a constant continuation of life. In fact, growth would be impossible, if there were no death. So there is no reason to fear death.

A scientific thinker does not fear death, but regards it as a necessity for changes or growth. By death, science means a change i. e., change from one form into another. In our lifetime, we see that naturally every seventh year we have almost a new body, and every molecule of our body is constantly changing. Every microscopic cell in our organism is producing new forms. The old forms are dying, and different new forms are coming up. When you plant tree, you will see that how the seed dies before the plant begins to grow. So death is the beginning of a new stage of life, and therefore, we must not cling to that old belief, thinking that we must regard death as the constant enemy of life ; but we must regard as a friend of life. Now, if by death we understand a change, then the word '*immortality*' will receive a new meaning ; that is, it is that state, which does not die and is not subject to death. Or, in other words, immortality means a state, which is absolute, unchangeable, deathless, or absolutely unchangeable. So the real meaning of immortality is persisting in existence, without being subject to any change whatever. Now, if that be the meaning of immortality, is there any state which is absolutely free from changes of all kinds ? This is a great question. The answer to this question is very deep. We shall have to analyse the whole phenomenal world to find out, if such a thing as unchangeability exists. For science tells us that everything is subject to a change ; and everywhere we see the signs of change and decay. You all know how the solar system has come into existence

from one mass of nebulous matter. Gradually it becomes congealed from that gaseous form, and becomes solid. Then again it goes back to that gaseous state. Our physical bodies are subject to change. In fact, our bodies are for ever changing. If you can imagine yourself as a whirlpool in ether, or if you have seen your hand through the X-rays, then you will know what your body is like. All around yourself there are the same ethereal particles of matter in a homogeneous mass, which is an impenetrable thick solid substance. There is no space between the particles, and you cannot separate them. In that mass, there is a little eddy here and there, and that we call our bodies. Every minute cell of the body is constantly under change. We understand by sensation that something comes from the external world, either in the form of light vibration, or in the form of air vibration, and that affects our nervous systems, produces certain change in the optical nerves and different nerves of the brain cells, and there a certain vibration is produced, and that vibration is interpreted by consciousness change. So we see at every step that there is change, and without change we cannot hear any sound, we cannot see any colour, and we cannot smell anything. All the feelings and thoughts are certain kinds of vibrations. They grow and disappear. One range of vibration lifts us on a certain region of consciousness, and other range produces other vibrations of emotions.

So all the vibrations mean change. Our whole being also is subject to change. Then where is that im-

mortal existence, we ask this question to a scientist. But science does not answer. There is no such thing in the world as absolute unchangeability. The phenomena of the world must change. Anything that exists in time and space, is subject to change, and so with any form we can imagine. Form may be of matter or ether, but in either case, it is subject to change. Now, if by 'immortality' we mean that the soul will be clothed with a new form and will go to heaven and enjoy celestial pleasures during eternity, clothed in ethereal form, subject to no change throughout eternity, can we imagine an ethereal form which will last like a statue, because any emotion or feeling presupposes some kind of change, so that it will have a body, which would not be subject to any kind of change? No, we cannot conceive of such a thing. So immortality cannot be applied to celestial bodies, no matter how fine or ethereal they may be.

If we analyse the conception of pleasure, we find that we cannot have any feeling of pleasure, if we have no conception of pain. Similarly if we have no conception of pain, we could have no conception of pleasure. We can only know what one feeling is, by comparing it with other feeling we had before as well as knowing the difference. And then, if we are going to enjoy pleasure throughout eternity, we must have some sort of conception of pain, and otherwise we cannot enjoy pleasure throughout eternity. It is for that reason, those, who believe in an eternity, will have to believe in eternal hell fire. The underlying truth of this is that we cannot enjoy the one without experiencing the other.

In the gross descriptions of hell and heaven, we find that there is a glass wall, separating hell from heaven, through which the souls, enjoying celestial pleasures, can see the others suffering, and can compare and enjoy their pleasures ; otherwise there is no enjoyment. It would be truly impossible for us to enjoy that pleasure, if we enjoy that all the time and have no l break. Now, if we like music and hear music day and night, without doing anything else, music would be a pleasure no more to us, and within six hours we would be tired of it. If we see one colour all the time, it would no longer be a colour. If we can go to heaven and remain there throughout eternity, it would be no pleasure at all. Now, under all these conditions, we cannot find that eternal life in heaven with a finer body in the meaning of immortality, nor the enjoyment of celestial pleasures of the same kind, without having any condition for comparison, is the meaning of immortality. Those, who believe that immortality means a personl immortality, do not understand the meaning of the word 'personality'. Now, what is the meaning of personality ? It is a kind of mask ; it is a garment of the mind. We have read of double, triple and quadruple personalities. There was a girl in England, who had ten personalities, each of which was distinct. So, by personality we must not understand a certain state of consciousness. It is like an assumed character on the stage. When the individual soul assumes a certain character and plays a certain part in the drama of life, then that particular character is the particular personality for the time being.

When different ideas develop and different tendencies and desires appear, then different personalities come up. Then we forget our old personality. So, if we analyse our personality, we will find that it is subject to disease, decay and death. Therefore, the personality does not mean the absolute unchangeable state either on this plane or in heaven.

Some persons believe that this immortality is a conditional one, which is not a natural gift, but is a certain gift of God to certain individuals. Then comes the question as to what gift it is and under what conditions it is received. Who will decide how many degrees above error one must be in order to obtain that gift from God? Some people may say a certain modes of living, and work and devootional exercise are sufficient for receiving the gift. Still if we analyse these devootional exercises and those mental and physical works, we will find that all our actions are governed by action and reaction, or by law of cause and sequence; for every cause must produce an effect. Now, if the result be eternal or everlasting, the cause must be eternal or everlasting; because a finite cause can never produce an infinite result. It is against the law of nature. Now, call our actions are either good or evil. If we add all our good and evil actions during a lifetime, even of a hundred years, they cannot be unlimited. The effect, therefore, cannot be unlimited. Realize then that the cause must be unlimited too. God cannot even change that law, because, no matter how powerful He may be, it is His own law. Can we imagine the law of cause and sequence stopping for a second? No; otherwise

whole universe would fall to pieces. So those, who believe that God changes the laws of nature, are simply making some statements which have no ground whatever. We cannot take any stock in those statements. So, God cannot give a free gift to any individual indiscriminately ; because the theologians say that there must be some kind of devotional exercises to bring that gift. Now, if we depend upon some devotional exercise, then that is also a limited cause, and must produce a limited effect. Then everlasting life, as the reward of all our good acts, is an impossibility We cannot get it, because it would be contrary to the laws of nature. Therefore all the philosophers in India do not believe in such a statement. They believe in many heavens, and by the law of action and reaction, they try to explain that earthly life is subject to change as heavenly. Therefore eternal life is not eternal; it is temporary. Millions and millions of years, when compared to eternity, would appear to us like a flash of light, as it is temporary. Therefore, all the great philosophers in India have said :

‘From the highest heaven to the limit of the universes all these different places of existence are subject to growth and change.’¹

Those, who do good deeds, go to heaven, may remain there till their time expires, and then they go to some other realms. They may return to this earth, or, if they go to heaven, they must enjoy celestial pleasures there for thousands of year, but

1. *Bhagavad Gita*, VIII. 16.

it must end. Even if we get celestial bodies, those bodies being subject to change, we will have the sensations of pleasure and pain. Then all those higher beings, the angels and archangels, who dwell in those celestial regions, are limited. They may have psychic perception, but still there is limitation. And that conception we find in no other religion or philosophy, except in the writings of the great thinkers of the Vedic age. Because they went deeper, and so they would not accept anything on hearsay. A revelation of God, which does not appeal to reason, does not touch our own senses, does not conform to all the laws of nature, and cannot be truth. If Christ was possessed of immortal life, then each one of us must have it by birthright, otherwise Christ had not got it. There is one universal law, just as the law of light, the law of action and reaction or the law of cause and sequence. They are all alike, and we find at every step this law prevails. As Christian science says :

‘Discover the laws of nature ; if you cannot harmonize the truths of Christ with the laws of nature, you have not discovered any truth.’

Your going to heaven does not mean immortality, and having a celestial body does not also mean that. Then where is the meaning of immortality ? Is it possible to have anything unchangeable in this world of changes ? That question disturbed the minds of thinkers long ago, and today Kant, Huxley and Ernst Haeckel have tried to discover something that is unchangeable, and absolute truth. But have they discovered it ?

Those who have searched this truth, can be divided into two classes. The one may be classed as materialists. They deny the existence of soul as separate from the body, and according to them, all such questions of immortality of God and souls are more waste of time and energy. Of course, they try to find out everything from matter and force. They say force is immortal, and energy is immortal, and that is all. But can we remain contented after hearing those conclusions of the great materialistic thinkers of the world? The materialistic thinkers are not the product of the twentieth century alone. In olden times and even in the Vedic age, there were those, who denied the existence of anything which existed beyond the range of sense perception. They denied anything that is abstract. They did not find that soul exists independently of the body.

Among the modern scientists too you will find that there is such a class, but their arguments do not satisfy our minds. Even if they tell us that there is no soul, yet a voice within tells us: 'Go and search again, you will find something better'. So, if we go on searching, at every step, we hear a voice speaking from within: 'There is something immortal'. Otherwise this question of immortality would never arise. Because our longing for immortality is too strong, and we cannot resist it. Try to think of yourself as dead, but you cannot, You may think of your body as lying dead, but you are standing beside it, and watching over it. You cannot think of yourself as non-existent, because the very idea that you are dead or

you have ceased to exist, presupposes that you are conscious of that idea, and, therefore you cannot. Why is it that if our whole nature was not meant to last throughout eternity, we have such an idea ? It is part and parcel of our being. and we must go on searching until we find it. Those, who imagine that body and soul last throughout eternity, are mistaken. The atoms will arise, because they are indestructible. The astral body is destructible. The finer etherial form, which may manifest itself through cells, is not eternal, as it is earthly. Then, where is the immortal spark of our own being ? In searching within the body as well as within the realms of the mind and the intellect, the great thinkers and inspired sages of the Vedic age declared that our soul is immortal. The soul is like the receptacle of a finer substance, which is like the source of our conscious existence, and that source is immortal. It is not subject to change, and they called it *Atman*. It is not the same as *ego*. but it is the Knower of the *ego*. It is not same as 'I', but that, by which we know ourselves it is I am standing here, I am hearing, and that is our true Self ; that is the *Atman*. You may say: 'How can we know the existence of such a thing'. You do not have to search outside, as it is already within. Tell me are you ever conscious of your brain ? You are never conscious of your brain. No, you do not know that you are the interpreter of the brain. Who knows the matter ? If the source of consciousness is the source of matter, then who knows matter ? Matter does not know itself.

Modern science has resolved the whole phenomenal universe into three states, and has explained that they are matter, energy and consciousness. These three things are the fundamental principles of the universe. If you have studied science or any of the philosophies of the world, you will find these three things, matter, consciousness and energy. But, in truth, matter, force or energy are inseparable ; they are the different states of the same substance. Then there comes the third thing, consciousness. Most of the materialistic thinkers try to divorce this consciousness from matter and force, and the idealists try to divorce matter and force from mind or consciousness. A modern Christian Scientist says that there is no matter ; it is all mind and all consciousness. Ask them what they mean by mind, and what they mean by matter. They will say they do not know. In fact, all these three, matter, force and consciousness, are indestructible, incorruptible and eternal. The question comes up : what is the nature of the third substance ? What becomes of the third substance ? If matter is indestructible, force is indestructible, then what becomes of consciousness ? Shall we believe it to be the result of matter and force, as the materialists declare ? When you have the conception of matter, it is a state of consciousness, i.e., knowingness. When you have the conception of force or energy, it is a material state. They are incorruptible and indestructible. If two states of consciousness be indestructible, what will be the nature of consciousness itself ? Will it be indestructible ? If the fruit of the tree is indestructible

and eternal, can you believe that the tree is destructible and non-eternal ? These are the fruits of the tree of consciousness, and if the two states of consciousness be indestructible and eternal, then the tree of consciousness is also indestructible and eternal. We cannot know the existence of matter, if we are unconscious. Put a scientist into the chloroform state, ask him if he is conscious of the existence of matter. He does not know, and he is unconscious. You may look through a microscope at an atom, and divide it into the subdivisions *i. e.* into which you divide it into an electron or an ion. If these be incorruptible and indestructible, then the two states are indestructible. It is always the knower which knows. Matter does not know, energy does not know, and this knower is our true self. It is not far from us, it is the innermost being within us.

Your mental condition may change ; you may be in anger, you may have another passion, you may have certain desire, you may think of the body, and you may think of yourself as wicked or spiritual, but all the time you know these feelings are nothing but different states of your consciousness. It is the background of the spirit, or of your personality, like the background of the canvas, upon which your personality is painted by the Divine hand. You may change the picture, but the canvas is always there. We can realize our true Self, which will be more everlasting than celestial pleasure, and which will be as eternal as Divinity itself.

The books will not reveal this Truth. By reading books and scriptures and their commentaries, we can-

not know this Truth, We cannot understand our immortal nature by thought, nor by works, and nor by devotional exercises, if we search for it. Then separate the source of consciousness from its attachment to material things, analyse your own nature, and discriminate, See what part is in you that is unchanging like the witness, which is the knower of the body, sense perceptions, intellect, apprehensions and feeling. Realize that *Atman*. Enter into the cave of your heart. Through the practices of Raja Yoga, *i.e.* through concentration and meditation, enter into the state of superconsciousness, and there you will be free. There you will realize that you are free from the body and mind, and you are beyond body, beyond mind, beyond intellect and beyond death. Death cannot touch you, and the fear to death will vanish from you for ever. Then you will know that fire cannot burn you, water cannot moisten you, air cannot dry you, and swords cannot pierce you ; you are immortal, unchanging, eternal, everlasting and divine.¹ What fear can you have. Fear of death cannot exist. All fear proceeds from ignorance and selfishness, and when you have eliminated all ignorance, the Divine illumination will come, the sun of wisdom will shine above the horizon of your mental plane, and there you will see the light of the eternal Truth will come to you, and then you will see what is real and immortal. And if you study all the scriptures of the Hindus, you will find that

1. *Bhagavad Gita*. II. 23-24.

the divine thought of immortality is the highest ideal of the Hindu scriptures. But how is it to be obtained? By being conscious of your immortal nature. Because knowing is being. When you know yourself as immortal, you are immortal. But if you know yourself as a limited physical thing, you are going to die. All our knowledge is a state of consciousness. So if you change this state of consciousness, you will never die. Because you are yourself the changeless principle, and so change of any kind will not affect you. Change is fleeting and unreal, but you are immortal. When you know God, you have attained everything. To know God means to be God; '*Brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati*'. God, when known by a mortal like us, is no longer God. But if we wish to know God, we must know our true self. which is immortal, divine, eternal, everlasting and one.

CHAPTER TEN

SPIRITUALISM

Different questions about death—The popular belief in the soul—Three theories for proving the existence of the soul—The materialistic theory—The examination of the brain—Speech-centre and the brain—The mind and the brain—The combination theory—The transmission theory—What the dying persons do—What happens after death—Vedanta and the transmission theory—Mind and matter—Mind and the brain—*Individuality* and *personality*—Souls after death—*Personality* is subject to change—An instance of the other world—What do we mean by life after death—Heavens are not eternal—What is eternity—Souls create their own conditions—Teachings of Vedanta are in perfect harmony with nature—We are the creators of our destinies

The question often rises in our minds what exist after death ? This question rises today, and it will rise always in the minds of all. The same question was asked by kings and beggars, by sages and saints, and by philosophers, thinkers and religionsists of all countries all over the world. We are discussing it today and tomorrow, and the same question will rise again in other minds. For the moment we might forget, and we might not take heed of the condition after the death of the physical body, but the time is sure to come, when we shall wake up, and would ask the same question. We might be absorbed in our daily occupations, in the struggles for existence, and in troubles and tribulations, which we have to encounter every day. We may forget that we will live after death, or what will happen after death. But as soon as we see some one passes away as well as the relatives, dearest and nearest friends pass out of the body, we stop,



The portrait of Jesus the Christ, drawn by the Spirit-hand.



The portrait of the disembodied Spirit, with spectacle in his eyes,
before the Medium.

and think : Where has he gone ? What has become of the body ? The body is going to decompose. What was there to keep it alive, and where has it gone now ? The same question will arise again and again, and disturb the peace of our minds, and until we find the proper solution of that question, we can never have peace in our minds.

But before we find the solution of that problem, we discover at the very threshold of our inquiry an adamant wall, standing before us, which it is almost impossible to break through. Weak intellects stop here. Feeble minds, with feeble efforts, fail to go beyond that wall, and that wall is nothing but a belief that the body is the producer of the soul, and that the soul is the result of the functions of the organism of this gross material body.

The popular belief that every soul will rise after death, because of the miraculous resurrection of one particular individual at a certain time, does not appeal to our minds any more. We have outgrown those states of foolish belief and blind faith. We wish to get positive proofs. We want to discuss the subject psychologically, metaphysically, and scientifically. Now let us see whether this theory, that the body produces the soul, is correct.

There are three theories given in the attempts to prove the existence of the soul : the one is the production theory ; the other is the combination theory ; and the third is the transmission theory. The production theory is the theory, described by the atheists, agnostics, materialists, and evolu-

tionists. They believe that the body produces the soul, but they do not answer the question, how body can produce a soul, which is a mass of thought, or a mass of intelligence, or whatever they may call it. These materialistic thinkers might tell you that a body is produced of other bodies, that is, the bodies of the parents. But what force is there that holds all the molecules and particles of matter together and combines them and produces your body in one particular form and my body in another form ? What makes these distinctions ? They do not answer those questions. They say that it is unknown to us, and it is a mystery ; but the bodies of the parents produce the bodies of the children, and this is true. But what produces the bodies of the parents ? They say their parents. But that is not the true answer. In trying to explain this theory, they produce another combination of matter, without explaining the forces which combine and preproduce these conditions. They simply make an assertion, and that assertion leads to a fallacy, that is, the body produces a body, but that is not the real cause that produces the human body. It is like explaining the cause by the effect ; it is like putting the cart before the horse. So, the explanation does not appeal to our minds. At the same time we notice that among the hosts of physiologists, medical practitioners and pathologists, there is a belief that the body produces the soul of thought, of intelligence, of consciousness, and of whatever you may call the mind ; and some have gone so far as to locate the particular functions of

the mind in some particular parts of the brain. For instance, when we see objects before our presence, particular convolutions of the brain are stimulated ; and when we hear a sound, our tympanal lobes are stimulated, and so on. Those, who believe in the production theory, tell that mind is conterminous with the functions of the brain as well as with the nervous states, and they try to explain that so long as the brain is active, the mind exists ; but when the brain stops its functions, the mind is dead ; because the mind cannot live independent of the functions of the brain. Their theory is that certain impressions come through our nerves and they are poured into the brain by the peculiar function of the brain. They are metamorphosed into ideas, thoughts, emotions, feelings, sensations, expressions of the face, 'speech, and so on. Just as food-stuff, after falling into the stomach, is metamorphosed and changed into different elements by digestion, as the stomach is functioning to produce digestion, and as the liver is to secrete bile, so the brain secretes thoughts, intelligence, and consciousness. And that is their argument. According to them, the impressions are like material bodies or body-stuffs that go into our nerves, and fall into the pot of the brain, and are instantly changed into thought, intelligence, ideas, and so on.

But when we examine the brain properly, we find that a man can live and perform his functions even, when half of his brain is diseased and decayed. Such cases have been experimented upon and recorded. There is a great medical surgeon and physician in

New York City, Doctor Thompson, who is an authority in Roosevelt Hospital. He has written a book, in which he describes the records and statistics that have been taken after post-mortem examinations. A man had lost half of his brain. It was absolutely gone, and in his whole lifetime, he did not know at what time he had lost the half of his brain, and it made no change in his mode of life, in his thoughts, and in his occupation. He could utilize the one half of the brain that was in good condition, and make it perform the functions of both halves.

A man who uses his right hand, his centre of speech is on the left side of the brain. Now, this is one of the most important proofs that has been brought out by scientific men of this age. Our speech-centre depends upon the action of our arms to a great extent. A left-handed man has his speech centre developed on the right side of the brain, and the righthanded man has his speech-centre on the left side of the brain.

If one half of the brain is decayed or diseased and if that man be right-handed and the left side of the brain is diseased, he becomes absolutely mute and dumb, and he cannot speak. But, if he uses the left hand, after a few days or a few weeks he will be able to develop a speech-centre on the right side of the brain, and then he will be able to speak his language fluently. These are experimented, and are proved facts.

What do these prove ? It proves that mind is something distinct from the brain, and the brain is

the instrument which is utilized by the soul, or the mind, or whatever you may call it. You may call it personality. But personality is not the result of the function of the brain. But, on the contrary, it is the one who uses the instrument of the brain as if from outside. We may compare the brain with a piano. A piano can produce music, when there is music in the soul of the musician. But there is no music in the piano. It must be in the conscious mind of the musician, who must be outside of the piano and must play upon the keys. So there is the music of all the harmonious activities of our body and mind, and that harmony is in the mind of the soul, and that soul is playing upon the cells of the nerve-centres in the brain, from the outside. As if the brain is over-shadowed by some invisible entity, who is playing upon the brain, producing its harmony; or if there be no harmony of music in the soul, then there is discord, which are manifested in ourselves. So the production theory has become almost absurd today. No scientific thinkers, who have studied all these experiments, made by the great scientists of the world, can believe any more in the theory that the brain secretes the consciousness, as the liver secretes bile. It is an absolutely irrational statement.

The combination theory explains that the neural current is a stream which produces a stream of feelings. There is no connection between them. They are running simultaneously. Some of the psychologies that are taught in the schools and colleges, teach the idea that consciousness is a

stream, and a complex thing, made up of a stream of feelings, and when these currents pass through the nerves ganglia and cortical walls, these cortical walls make a resistance. This resistance produces a kind of nerve-glow or white heat-glow, and that glow is their consciousness. That is a very absurd idea.

We have another explanation better than this. But the point is that the transmission theory is more satisfactory. According to this theory, the soul or mind is outside of the brain. It is not the result of the brain, but it is something like a self-conscious entity, which is using the brain, just as a musician uses the piano, and plays on the keys. Now that theory is generally accepted by all the spiritualists and the religionists and all the metaphysicians and philosophers, and they understand the true language of the soul and its relation to the body. Those, who do not believe in the transmission theory, cannot explain how these instances of phenomena, which are recorded by the Psychical Research Society of America as well as of Europe and elsewhere, happen such as the appearance of the 'double'. For instance, when you are sitting in your room, and you are absolutely in repose while conscious, reclining in a rocking chair or on a couch, you are alone and your mind is greatly disturbed by some business problem. You do not know how to answer it. Suppose there is no one to disturb you or interfere with you in any way in the room, or in the house. Your door is locked. Now suddenly you see your 'double'. This something

is like yourself, coming out of you, going to the desk, taking a piece of paper and a pencil in hand, and solving your problem and leaving the written answer on the paper. Then you are dreaming as it were, and suddenly you wake up, and go to your desk, and you find the solution. You remember that you saw your double, but you do not know what it is. It is like an apparition, There have been many such instances. How do you explain this ? Who has done it ? Did somebody else go into the etherial form, which is similar to your own form from outside ? Even if you believe that you admit the existence of intelligence or an intelligent entity, which can exist without the material and gross physical body, and that can satisfy your mind. But these cases cannot be explained by any other theory than the transmission theory. This transmission theory tells us that the double is the astral self of the individual, and this astral self is something which can live independent of the gross material body, and this astral self can pass out and can appear in etherial form and perform many acts, which our ordinary waking self cannot perform. This astral doubles are sometimes perceived by relatives and friends of dying persons.

It is found that the dying persons may have a very strong attachment to their children. If their children are going to be orphans, that is, if there is no one to take care of them, and if their relatives are at a distance, their great desire to help their children would make them project their astral or double, and appear before the relatives, and give

a sudden message. Sometimes it happens after the death of the individual, and, in most cases, it is at the time of death, just at the moment when the individual is passing out of the body or the minute before. There have been records of both kinds. Now, how do you explain these, if you do not believe in transmission theory? If the soul is the result of the functions of the brain, then everything would be at an end. But it is not the fact. These experiments have proved that there is such a thing as a soul or a personality or an entity which is selfconscious and which continues to live even, when the gross physical body is left behind. Vedanta accepts the transmission theory. It tells us that matter is one half of the universe, which is the object, and mind, the subject, which is the other half of the universe. The one half of the universe cannot produce the other half, and so they remain simultaneously. They are in existence from the very beginning. That is the existence of mind as well as of matter. Matter is the object of perception, and mind is the perciever, the one who perceives. So you cannot have any sensation of perception of matter, if there be no subject in you, who perceives. Our knowledge of matter is nothing but a state of our mind. It is the state of consciousness. This consciousness must be prior to any condition of matter, or any experience of sensation, or of feelings, that are produced by the contact of matter with our senses. No one can deny the priority of consciousness or self-consciousnes. If you are unconscious, you

cannot have any perception. So you see that every experience that we have is more or less subjective. We call our knowledge of matter is only a personal knowledge of the object, but a great deal of that knowledge is subjective, that is, we are conscious of our own minds. We cannot get out of our own minds anywhere. We cannot go into the chair or the table, and find out what is going on there and how the table affects our senses, and produces sensation ; and if such sensations are the states of consciousness of our own mind, then we know that there is such a thing as a table or a chair ; otherwise we can never do it. Now one of the scientific facts is that motion produces nothing but motion. But our consciousness or intelligence is not motion. Can you refute this ? No, it is something beyond motion. It is what understands and knows motion. So how can motion produce the activity of the brain or activity of the molecules, of the nerves, and of the brain cells ? How can that motion produce something which does know itself ? That is a proof against all the materialistic theories. Therefore, to say that the soul is the result of the function of the brain, which is the intelligent entity, is an impossibility.

Referring to that priority of the mind, when you dissect a brain, for instance, and you do not find any such thing as self-existing or self-conscious entity, you deny the existence of a soul ; and this very denial of that particular case presupposes the existence of another mind, which must think that way, the

mind of the dissector. So, in every instance, there is the priority of mind before any conception that you can make. If you say that you have no soul, it would be just as absurd, as if I say at this moment that I have no tongue. I am using the tongue, while I am talking, and if I deny the existence of tongue, I would be a fool. Similarly, if you deny the existence of your own self as a self-conscious entity, you are using that self-conscious entity as a foundation, while you are denying it, which would be absurd and ridiculous. Now, after realizing this condition that the soul is that self-conscious entity which is prior to all the material conditions and is not the result of the motion, we ask the question ; whether that soul can retain its individuality ? Now here you will notice little distinction between individuality and personality. Again many people get these mixed up.

Some people take personality as individuality and individuality as personality. But we will go to the root of these two words, and will keep the original meaning before our minds, and then we will have no more confusion. The word *personality* comes from the Latin *persona*, the mask. The personality is that particular consciousness which is related to the physical body. Thus, you are Mr. or Mrs or Miss So and so. That is your personality. You are an active man ; you are a business man ; you have hunger and thirst and all these limitations of the body. That is the mask which the individual is wearing at the present moment. But individuality is something which is beyond the body, and is

indivisible. That which is indivisible, you cannot cut or disturb like your sense of *I*. It is like an indivisible current. It is the continuity of the one thought, the thought of *I*. I was a school boy. I played with my school mates. The same *I* have gone through all these other experiences. Now I am standing or sitting here, that is identity or foundation or individuality, which is indivisible. It is the property of your spiritual self or spiritual consciousness. It has no relation to your personality at all. Now that personality might be left here, and might change, but your individuality, the sense of *I*, can never change, because that sense of *I* will continue to exist with you, no matter where you go. You are an unit of force, and that unit is a self-conscious unit, and when you leave this body, you take that sense of *I* with you ; whether you have a gross physical or an astral or a causal body. You have always the sense of *I* with you. When you dream, you have the sense of *I* within ; when you are in sound sleep, you have this sense ; otherwise you would not remember that you slept and had no dreams. You can never get rid of this, sense of *I*, unless you attain to the highest liberation or the freedom of the soul, and become one with God. Then your individuality is infinite. Just as the individuality of Christ was not lost, when he realized that he and his Father were one, but it became infinitely expanded. Therefore we can never lose our individuality.

Sometimes some of the souls, after passing out of the body at the time of death, contract all the

forces that are scattered all over the body, and come to a nucleus like an atom, and there it may lose its personality for the time being.

That personality is subject to change, and might be held in an earth-bound condition. If it has strong attachments to relatives or friends, and if it cannot get over those 'attachments, it hovers around them, remains close to them, tries to help them, to be loved by them, and there it is conscious of its personality. For instance, if I build a beautiful house, and that beautiful house abounds in beautiful furniture and such things, and if I have devoted most of my time to decorating that house, I become so attached to it that after death I would dislike to leave that spot, and I would remain right there, invisible. I might not be seen by others, but my strong attachment will hold me there in that place. I would be wondering, while my relatives and friends and all the dearest ones do not recognize me ; and there I have to suffer. Now that is what happens with certain people ; they do not know that they are dead. They retain their personality. At the time of the war in Europe, there are soldiers who are dying with the feelings of revenge, hatred and anger in their hearts. After death, they will find that they are continuously fighting. They project the forms of their enemies and try to fight against them. It is a state of unrest. It is just like a state of hell. And there is worse hellish condition after the death of the soldiers in the spirit world than they have here. Sometimes a soul passes out suddenly, when his body is blown

into atoms through an explosion. The shock of that explosion is so great that the soul will remain unconscious for a long time. There will be no further progress of this soul. Those who understand the spiritual laws, will never advocate war, because we have no right to take the lives of individuals, especially of our own brethren, who have come to this world to develop their conditions. Instead of helping them, we are taking their lives, cutting it short suddenly by swords and by all kinds of instruments of war. It is a terrible state of affairs, and the souls, after passing out of this body, are in a state of unconsciousness. They do not know where they are. Then they are in utter confusion. They need help as well as some one to guide them to make them realize that they have left their bodies.

A story now comes to my mind, of what was supposed to have been a communication from one of the residents of that city, Los Angeles, who passed away in 1913. He was a Supreme Court Judge, and he was supposed to communicate with this world through some friends. It was a very terrible condition for the particular woman whom he met in the other world, and whom he knew in this material world. She was living in a boarding house, and after she passed out, she was still living in a boarding house, and she was eating beef steak, meat and potatoes, but she did not like the coffee. The coffee was very poor, and she grumbled. She said : "It is terrible. I cannot sit at the table with the same friends. And potatoes are not very

good. But still she was hungry and she ate. Now that gives the idea of what we can do, when we are in an earth-bound condition. She did not realize that she had passed away, but she thought that she was still living. She thought that it was funny that she did not have the same or better friends than she had here in this world. That shows that we take all our desires with us after death, and we manufacture these objects of enjoyment by our thoughts. The realm beyond death is the realm of realized ideals, or of realized thoughts. If we think of a piece of bread, the bread is there and we will eat. If we feel hungry, we are eating. If we think of coffee, we are drinking coffee. Thus we see how important it is for us to understand this that if we die with the attachment to any particular kind of food, or any particular kind of clothes or jewels, or anything in this life, we carry that attachment with us, and with our desires we manufacture those things out of the finer material in the spirit world. Instead of progressing and casting off these first conditions, which are narrow, and which limit the progress of the souls, we take them with us, and continue to enjoy them, until we go to sleep and wake up. If our good thoughts and good deeds would help us, then we could go on progressing. But many of the departed spirits remain in that state of delusion for a long time. Our time does not affect the the spirits. Our thousand years may be five days to them, because ours is according to our standard and theirs according to their standard. So no one can say how

long a soul will remain in any particular condition, but it is important that we should remember this law that we create our future, we create our destiny and we build our character by our thoughts and deeds.

It is not that we suddenly get transformed and grow wings, but it is the continuity of this present life. Life after death means the continuity of this life, only on another plane. But it is not a place. There is no space relation. It is like a wheel within a wheel. Just as you can hear the vibrations of different musical instruments ; one can be of low vibration and another of high, and both can exist without interfering with each other. At the same time you can hear both. Similarly, around this earth there is a spirit world. It is like a fourth dimension. It is on another plane. All that exist there do not exist there because space-relations do not exist there.

Those who have firm faith and believe in a heaven, where the angels sing the praises of the Lord, where there would be peace like the peace on Sunday in a city, where everything is closed or in a peaceful church, and those who believe in things like these, will find them there. Because all human beings are attracted to those dream-like states which we call heaven. And there are many such heavens. The Mohammedan, who believes in the *houris* and the drinking of wine and having fine air and plenty of shade, and if he holds that as an ideal, will go to a plane of consciousness, where he will project all these ideas, and make his own heaven ; and those eternity. Some will find peace that way, but not

But these conditions are not eternal. They are like dream states. There are many such heavens. Each nation and each particular tribe among the different nations had held a certain belief of what they would enjoy after death in a celestial realm. For instance the Red Indian, who has his belief in a hunting ground, goes to the heaven like hunting ground. He believes in that like the old Scandinavian going to Valhalla, where he would sit in front of Odin, and he would fight with his other friends and during the fight he would be wounded, and then miraculously healed of his wounds. Then they would run and chase a wild boar, and have a big feast, and this will continue every day throughout eternity. Some will find peace that way, but not throughout eternity, I have mentioned it already that eternity is a long time, and even millions of years are not to be considered as eternity. Eternity means time without end and without beginning. It is just like a circle. Eternity forms always a circle. All progress must go up to a certain point, and then it will come back again. Some go to heaven suddenly, At the time of the expiration of their celestial happiness, their other desires will wake up which are dormant for the time being, and those will bring them down to this plane again. They will be born again as human beings. Now you need not get frightened about it, for they had such desires. There is no one who forces them, but it is their desires. They are creating their own conditions. That is the law. No one punished the wicked ; on one rewards the virtuous ; but the soul rewards and

punishes itself as the result of its own thoughts and deeds. We gravitate. You are here, because you have the desire to come to this world and enjoy certain pleasures and gain certain experiences, which you could not get anywhere else ; and the same conditions prevail áfter you have gone to heaven. You will come back here again, and will gain some new experiences. And this is a great blessing that it is so ; otherwise, it would be a very monotonous state of affairs to play on the same harp. I would not enjoy that. You might, because you have been trained to believe that that is a high state. So the condition is this that after death we continue to live and go through different realms, where we develop certain powers, and each of them, we must remember, contains potentialities and possibilities. You must not think that three score years and ten in one plane has finished your manifestation. It could not be. The Christians have been taught that the Lord created them at the time of their births, and they came suddenly out of nothing, and they will continue to live for ever. That is not possible, Because, eternal life does not mean that it has a beginning at one end and at the other end it is endless. Can you imagine of a stick which you are holding one end and the other end would go to eternity and be endless ? What has a beginning must have an end. That is the law of nature. No one can imagine having a beginning and an end. Some think that this physical body can be kept throughout eternity ; but which has birth, must die. Of course, it may go through a transformation, but

it would not be the same body, just as we do not possess the same body, which we had, when we were babies. The baby-body is changed into the young body and that into the mature body, because every seven years every molecule of our body is renewed.

You have not the same brain, same sense of sight, and same sense of hearing. It is constantly changing. But in the midst of these changes, there is something unchangeable; and unless you realize that something, you cannot expect to have peace and happiness, because in the midst of all changes, you remain as the master, the centre, around which all the changes are going on like a whirlpool. You are the centre or the self-conscious entity, which can never die. So have faith in yourself that you are immortal. By immortality is meant eternal life, both beginningless and endless. No one has created you; no one could create you out of nothing. God Himself could not also create; He had not that power. So you existed first as a part of God, and you have come here in this world through experience and manifested your powers, and you are going back to God. Thus you complete the circle. It is the play of the divine forces of nature, and you are only that manifestations, and each individual unit of self-conscious entity will realize its infinite nature, by going through a great many manifestations either in this cycle, or in a cycle that will come.

You must understand that the soul can come down from the heavenly plane to this plane of consciousness, and be born again with more developed

powers, either to gain new experiences or to help others to gain knowledge. There are certain souls, who are perfected and who come down consciously, remembering all that they have gone through. They remember it all, and they have come down through sheer joys, as it were, to help humanity and set an example like Christ or Buddha or other Saviours. But we do not have that power. We gravitate, being forced by our past deeds. For instance, if I have the desire to be one of the best artists and before I realize a my ideal, I suddenly pass away, so you think my desires will have gone for nothing? No, they will bring me back again, and put me in proper environment through the proper channel, so that I could realize my ideal once more. That is a great comfort that it is so. One plane of life is not enough. You have been told that everything was fixed before you came to this plane, but how can one individual understand or know everything of this world of infinite phenomena unless they have infinite lives?

And for that reason the teachings of Vedanta are in perfect harmony with nature. It does not condemn any such ideas, but it puts them in their proper places. Some people have dreams of heavens, and they will go there. But, if you told that this heaven is an eternal state, you are hearing a statement which cannot be true. We must realize that the life after death is the continuation of the present life, and we make our future according to our thoughts and deeds. We are the creators of our destiny, of our character, and of our future, and we will continue

to live and come back and be born again on this earth, or on some other planet. We may go to some other planet, where there are different conditions and there we may develop up the infinite realm of this universal Spirit. There is no end of the experiences, but a perfected soul reaches that state, where there is no more birth, no more death, and no more disease, sorrow, or suffering. There reigns absolute peace and happiness, perfect knowledge and perfect wisdom, which is highest goal of human life.¹

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1. In the Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad (4.4.6), we find.

तदेव सक्तः सह कर्मणैति

लिङ्गं मनो यत्र निषक्तमस्य ।

प्राप्यान्तं कर्मणस्तस्य यत् किञ्चेह करोत्ययम् ।

तस्माल्लोकात् पुनरैत्यस्मै लोकाय कर्मणे ॥

इति नु कामयमानः अथाकाममानः—योऽकामो निष्काम आप्तकामो न तस्य प्राणा उत्क्रामन्ति, ब्रह्मैव सन्ब्रह्माप्येति ।

That, is, being attached, he, together with the work, attains that result to which his subtle body (*sukshma-sariram* or *lingam*) Or mind in attached. Exhausting the results of whatever work, he did in this life, he returns from that world to this for (fresh) work. Thus does the man who desires (transmigrates). But the man who does not desire (never transmigrates). Of him who is without desires, who is free from desire, the objects of whose desire have been attained, and to whom all objects of desire are but the self, the organs do not depart. Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman"—Vide also *Mandaka-Upanishad*, 3.2.2.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SPIRITUALISM AND VEDANTA

Modern spiritualism—Ancestor-worship—Ancient Egyptians, Babylonians and Chaldeans and ancestor-worship—Religion of the ancient Chinese—The ancient Parsees—Judaism and Mohammedanism—The saint-worship among the Roman Catholics—Belief in departed spirits in India—*Pitri-Loka*—Mediums and seances—Vedanta and the law of Karma—The realm of the fathers and the path which leads to the realization of Truth—Earth-bound souls—Mediums become more or less moral and physical wrecks in the end—The genuine phenomena of Spiritism—The attainment of Godconsciousness is the highest ideal of Vedanta.

यान्ति देवव्रत देवान् पितॄन् यान्ति पितृव्रताः ।

भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम् ॥

—गीता ६ । २५

The supreme Lord says : “The votaries of the gods or angels go to the gods : to the ancestors go the ancestor-worshippers. The spirit-worshippers go to the spirits ; but those who are devoted to Me, attain to Me and reach perfection.

MODERN spiritualism claims to have a supernatural origin like all other great religions of the world, which have been founded upon supernatural revelations. It has played its most important part in toning down the dogmas of Christian theology, in reforming the religious belief of the vast majority of the American people, and in starting fresh inquiries and investigations in the realm beyond the grave.

Within the last fifty years modern spiritualism has given wonderful demonstrations regarding the existence of the disembodied spirits who continue to live even after the dissolution of their gross material forms. It has brought comfort and consolation to the hearts of many people, who were suffering from the evil effects of scepticism and unbelief,

concerning a future life, caused by the dry theories of the atheistic, agnostic, and materialistic thinkers of the last century.

Through the help of modern spiritualism many of the educated and uneducated people of this country have now arrived at the conviction that there is such a thing as the human soul or a conscious entity, which continues to exist after the death of the physical body. Modern spiritualism has taught that the souls of the dead are not destined to suffer eternally, but that they are comfortably situated, and that they do not forget their early friends and relatives, but on the contrary, like guardian angles, they watch over their beloved ones, and are always anxious to help them and protect them from the dangers and misfortunes that surround their earthly lives. Modern spiritualism has taken away the horro of the post-mortem condition of life, and has enabled human minds to look upon death as the threshold of that wonderland, the inhabitants of which enjoy new lives, new experiences, renewed pleasures and happiness. Thus, having established a belief in the life after death, modern spiritualism has claimed to lay the foundation of a religion under the direction of those spirits, who have control over the mediums, or of those wise spirits, who visit the spiritualistic seances, whether private or professional, with a desire to enlighten the minds of the sitters by imparting the knowledge of supernatural things.

The attempts of modern spiritualism for establishing a religion upon the experiences, gathered through the communications of departed spirits, remind us of

those ancient times, when the primitive races were groping in the darkness of ignorance and when their minds were struggling hard to see a ray of light in that thick mist, which veiled a the realm beyond the threshold of death. In fact, the study of modern spiritualism leads us back to that age, when the religion of the primitive tribes consisted in keeping up the memory of their dead relatives and friends ; when after seeing ghost-like apparitions of the deceased, they came to believe that their ancestors were alive even, when their bodies were mouldering in the grave. It also takes us back to that age, when the principal form of worship was to please the departed spirits, by doing such acts, as they had liked most during their earthly career. This kind of ancestor-worship was the ancient form of spiritualism, and many scholars of modern times maintain that it was the beginning of all religions that are supposed to have a supernatural origin.

Ancestor-worship, of course, as we all know, means a belief in the spirits of departed ancestors and the supernatural powers, which they possess as well as our constant remembrance of them and our services in their memory, either by following their directions, or by seeking to rouse their sympathy and kindly feelings that they may help us during the distresses and misfortunes of our earthly lives. This ancestor-worship is to be found in almost all religions. After studying the ancient religions of different countries, we find clear traces of this old form of spiritualism among the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Chinese, Parsees,

Hindus, and other races, inhabiting different parts of the world.

The ancient Egyptians, like the modern spiritualists, believed in departed spirits. Their idea was that within the physical body of man there was a soul, having the shape of the gross body in every respect and with smaller hands, feet, and other limbs. It was like the 'double' or the counterpart of the physical man. When the physical man died, his counterpart or 'double' went out of the body and lived. The life of the 'double', according to the Egyptian belief, depended upon the condition of the material body, that is, so long as the gross form remained intact, the form of the double would remain perfect. But, if any part of the dead body was mutilated or injured, then the similar part of the 'double' would also be injured or destroyed. It was for this reason that they cared so much to preserve the dead bodies, by making mummies and building pyramids. This belief was the fundamental principle of the spiritualism and ancestor-worship of the ancient Egyptians.

The Babylonians and Chaldeans also believed in departed spirits, but not exactly in the same manner as the Egyptians did. They believed in the wandering shade of the dead, which was called *ekimmu* i.e. a spectre. It was like the shape of the physical man with similar form ; but they thought that it would meet with great misfortunes, if the dead body were not buried with proper ceremonies, so they observed a great many ceremonies in order to make the departed souls free from all misfortunes. The

Babylonians believed that the souls of those dead bodies, which were not buried with proper ceremonies, could not enter the house of the dead, called *arallu* i.e. the underground abode of the dead. It was like the *sheol* of the Hebrews. Therefore, the Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians took special care in burying the dead. The embalming of the dead body; the building of the monuments and tombstones, and the decorating of them with flowers, wreaths, flags, and other grave-offerings, which are practised today by the Christian nations in Europe and America, are but the remnants of the ancestor-worship of the ancient Babylonians and Chaldeans. These customs have been handed down to us, and we now blindly follow them without knowing their original meaning.

In same manner, it can be shown that the religion of the ancient Chinese was purely ancestor-worship. The Chinese have always believed in the spirits of their departed ancestors and relatives. They invoke them, seeking their help in time of need, and pray to them for welfare and prosperity. Even today the departed ancestors in China are honoured with titles and praises for the meritorious acts performed by their descendants.

The ancient Parsees believed in the spirits of their dead forefathers, and called them *fravashis* or Fathres. According to their belief, the spirits of the righteous were raised to the rank of angels, arch-angels and gods. The Parsees used to invoke them, praise them, pray to them, and ask help and blessings of them. They used to offer them food and other offerings in

memory of the *fravashis* or Fathers. Thus we see that the ancestor-worship or ancient form of spiritualism gave foundation to the religion of the Parsees as well as of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Chinese.

In Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism, traces of ancestor-worship have been discovered by modern scholars and the higher critics of the scriptures. In the 28th chapter of first Samuel, in the Old Testament, we read that Saul went to consult with the witch of Endor, who had familiar spirits. At the request of Saul, the witch invoked the spirit of Samuel, who appeared and gave him good counsels. The witches and wizards of the Old Testament were nothing more than the mediums of modern spiritualism. If the spiritualistic mediums of the present day had lived about four centuries ago; they would have been condemned by the Church as witches, and perhaps would have been hanged or burned at the stake.

The Hebrew word *elohim*, which has often been translated as God in the English Bible, was applied also to disembodied spirits. It is said that the witch of Endor saw *Elohim* ascending out of the earth ; here *Elohim* was used in the sense of disembodied spirit of the dead. It was a kind of materialization of the departed spirits, such as is to be seen in seances today. Do we not find a clear trace of ancestor-worship in Judaism when we read :

‘And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance’ ¹

1. *Samuel I*, Ch. XXVIII, 14.

The saint-worship among the Roman Catholics is another form of ancestor-worship or a remnant of ancient spiritualism. If we go to Rome or to any other part of Italy, we see the statues of canonized saints over their tombs, which are decorated with flowers and lighted candles, and the spirits of those saints are invoked with prayers and offerings. In fact, the beginning of the altars of the churches and temples can be traced back to the bgraves of ancestors. who lived righteous lives.² The offerings and sacrifices in the name of God likewise originated in the belief that the departed ancestors had hunger and thirst just as they had, when they were in flesh and blood. That which was at first the food and drink for the dead, developed into the form of sacrifices. The Holy Communion, the offering of thanks, and the Eucharist of the Christians are only the relics of the ceremonies, connected with the ancestorworship or spirit-worship of the primitive people. Similar ceremonies still prevail among the heathen races, who have never heard of Christ or of his crucifixion. They were the spontaneous expressions of human minds, which revered and honoured the memory of their departed ancestors. The chants and praises, which were used by primitive people to describe the virtues and the heroic qualities and deeds of their dead ancestors, have gradually taken the forms of hymns of praise, which are sung in churches and temples. Both Christ and Mohammed believed in departed spirits, and saw angels ascending and

2. *Vide Notes.*

descending over their heads, and received revelations through those who were but the spirits of the righteous.

In India, from very ancient times the belief in departed spirits has played an important part, in shaping the religious ideals of the Hindus. This belief found expression in the oldest scriptural writings of the Vedic period. As early as the time of the Rig Veda, which goes back at least five thousand years before the birth of Christ, this idea was very common, and there we read many hymns with invocations addressed to the *pitris*, or departed Fathers.³ They were invoked, praised, and invited to accept the offerings made to them at the time of the *shraddha*. The Sanskrit word *shraddha* means anything done in the memory of departed ancestors. It includes prayers, praises, and offerings. One of the daily duties of Hindu house-holders is to spend a few minutes in thinking of their departed ancestors, and in doing some good works in their name. They will feed the poor and hungry, or give clothes to the

3. In the 10th Mandala of the Rig Veda, there are 72 *mantras* between the 14th and 18th *suktas*. Those *mantras* or hymns have been addressed to Pitriloka, Yama, Pitriloka-Devata, Agni, Sarayu, Pusia ; Sarasvati, Water ; Soma, Mrtyu, Dhata and Tastha in connection with the burial, cremation and partial cremation. In the 2nd hymn of the 16th *sukta* we find also the seed of reincarnation of the soul :

श्रुतं यदा करसि जातवेदोऽग्नेमेनं परिदत्तात् पितृम्यः ।

यदा गच्छात्यसुनीतिमेतामथा देवानां क्शनीर्भवाति ॥

That is, "O Agni, when you will burn his body satisfactorily, send him then to the inhabitants of the *pitriloka*. When he will be born again ("yada *gacchatyasunitimetamatha*"), he will be devoted to the *devatas*'. This hymn proves also the existence of the soul in the world beyond death.

needy, or make pilgrimates in the name of their dead relatives. The Hindu belief is that the fruits of such good works, when performed in the name of the departed spirits, will go to them and help them in their onward progress. All virtuous deeds performed by the relatives and friends of the departed ones in the name of their ancestors, will surely bring good results to them.

According to the religion of the Vedanta, the souls of ordinary mortals remain earthbound for some time after their death, and expect help from their relatives and friends who are left behind. The good thoughts and good deeds of the living help the departed spirits in obtaining release from the earth-bound condition, and thus they are enabled to rise higher and enter into the realm of the *pitrīs*, Manes, or Fathers, in order to reap the fruits of the virtuous deeds done either by themselves, or performed for them, or in their name by their descendants, friends, and relatives.

The realm of the ancestors is called *pitriloka*,⁴ where the departed spirits of the ancestors enjoy heavenly life and celestial pleasures. This realm

4. We give here the following references of the *pitr-loka* from the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and others :

(1) "Pitaro Yamarajye" etc.—*Vajasaneyi-samhita* (Madhyandina-sakha) 19.45 ; *Maitriyani-samhita*, 3.11.10 ; 156.11 ; *Kathaka-samhita*, 38.2 ; *Taittiriya-brhahmana*, 2.6.34 ; *Apastamba-shrauta-sutra*. 1.9.12 ; *Sankhyayana-Grhya-sutra*, 5.9.4 ;

(2) "Pitsadanam tva lokam avastrnami" etc.—*Maitriyani-samhita*, 1.2.11 ; 20 : 14 ; 1.2.14 ; 23.11 ; *Kathaka-samhita*, 2.12 ; 3.3 ; 25.10 ; 26.5 ; *Manava-shrauta-sutra*, 1.8.2.9 ;

(3) "Pitsadane tava loka a sadayami" etc.—*Atharva-Veda-samhita*, 18.4.67 ;

is ruled by the first of the mortals, who, through good works, raised himself to that state of consciousness. He is called in Sanskrit *Yama*. Those, who have read the *Katha-Upanishad* and Sir Edwin Arnold's *Secret of Death*, are familiar with this word, *Yama*, the Ruler of the realm of the *pitris* or Manes or Fathers, who bestow all comforts and happiness, according to the desires of those who reach that plane of existence. The realm of the Fathers or ancestors corresponds to the heaven of the modern spiritualists. To go there is the highest ideal of ancient ancestor-worship and also of modern spiritualism. Spiritualism, whether ancient or modern, cannot describe any stage beyond the realm of the Fathers. The religion, which the modern spiritualists preach and claim as the true religion, does not take us further than this belief that we shall meet our departed ancestors, friends, and relatives, and rejoice in their company after death, and enjoy all the pleasures of life. The same ideal has been maintained by the ancestor-worshippers of all countries. The heaven of the ancestor-worshippers of ancient times is the heaven of the modern spiritualists. It is the realm of the Fathers. Many people may doubt its existence, but there is no reason for such doubts. Spiritualism leads human minds only a step beyond

(4) "Pitrnam lokam api gacchantu ye mrtah" etc.—*Atharva-veda-samhita*, 12.2.45 ; Vide also AV., 18.3.73 ; 12.2.9 ; 3.29.4 ; RV., 10.2.7 ; 10 : 15.1-4 ; 10.16 1-14 ; 10.17.3.9.

(5) "Pitrlokam gamayan jatavedah" etc.—*Atharva-veda-samhita*, 18.4.64 ;

(6) "Pitrlokat patim yatih" etc.—AV., 14.2.52 ;

(7) "Pitrn imani lokam" etc.—*Asvalayana-grihya-sutra*, 47.11 : Vide also *Sankhyana-grihya-sutra*, 4.10.5.

the grave in the world of phenomena, and opens the way to the belief in this realm of departed spirits. Where the ideal of ancestor-worship or the heaven of modern spiritualism ends, there is the beginning of the higher religion of Vedanta, which points out the path that directs the individual souls to the eternal Truth, which is beyond all phenomena, beyond heaven, and above the realm of the Fathers, and even far beyond the reach of the angles or bright spirits or gods.


After ages of investigations into the nature of life that one can possibly lead in the *Pitri-loka*. The Vedantic sages and seers of Truth have discovered that the heaven of the Fathers is not the highest abode of eternal Truth, but it is phenomenal and is subject to the laws, which govern the phenomenal universe. They say that the inhabitants thereof are bound by the law of *karma*, that is, by the laws of cause and effect or of action and reaction, and their stay on that plane is temporary, although it may last for thousands of years. The Vedantic seers of Truth say that the ancestors, or Fathers, do not know the highest Truth or the absolute Reality of the universe, and being bound by desires, they cannot reach the plane of Divinity, and consequently they cannot teach the divine truths which they do not know themselves.

These ancient seers of absolute Truth have realized through their own experience that the inhabitants of the spirit world, or the heaven of the ancestors, or the realm of the *Pitris* do not and cannot know the highest Truth on the plane of Divinity,

and, therefore, they cannot teach others, and so they have warned their disciples, followers and seekers after Truth in general not to waste their time and energy in seeking spiritual help from those departed spirits, who have no knowledge of truths that exist beyond the world of psychic phenomena, and who do not possess the power of helping any seeker after divine realization.

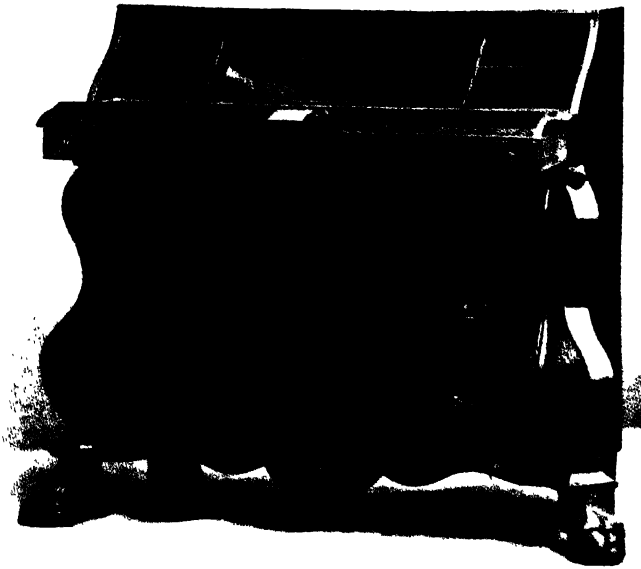
Disregarding such wise warnings, the American spiritualists of modern times have been spending their time and energy, and wasting their money in the vain hope of gaining the favour of those departed spirits, of learning the mysteries of life and death from them, and of solving the problems which trouble most human minds. Modern spiritualists claim to establish the foundation of a true religion upon the imperfect knowledge, derived from the communications of the foolish, deceitful, idiotic, and ignorant earthbound spirits, who control the mediums and pretend to know everything regarding the realms beyond death. The students of Vedanta often wonder how sensible men and women can sit in public seances night after night, and listen with great admiration and rapturous attention to the senseless prattle of ignorant spirits, who are supposed to control the weak minds of the mediums.

Having spent some time with the mediums of all kinds that exist in America, I wish to say a few words regarding my experience. I have been invited by the spiritualists to speak for them. and to attend their seances. I had accepted their invitations with great pleasure in order to make some investigations for





The indistinct face of the Spirit, just in front
of face of the Medium.



The Spirit is playing the Piano, with his hand.



The figures of the Spirits, coming out of the Octoplasm.

my own satisfaction. I have seen many materialized spirits, and have spoken with them. I have had long conversations with some who spoke through tin trumpets, and have asked them many questions ; but I have not found a single spirit in any seance and not a single medium, who could answer my questions satisfactorily. I have asked them about the life after death, the origin of the soul, the true nature of the soul, its relation to the universal Spirit, etc., but such questions, however, have never been answered by them; on the contrary, on many occasions they have confessed their ignorance, and have said : “We do not know ; you know better than we can tell you”. Some spirits have often referred to me for my approval of their answers to the questions which they were asked by other sitters. A few years ago, I was amused to hear from the spirit-control of a materializing medium in a public seance : “Oh, here is a thinking-box ; what can we say before him ?” This exclamation came from an American Indian spirit. I was sitting next to the husband of the medium, and, as he was a friend fo mine, I asked him the meaning of such a remark. He said : “She refers to you”. I inquired : “Why ?” He replied : “She thinks you are very wise, and she cannot show her power”. I am sorry to say that the seance was not successful that evening.

On another occasion, I had a long talk with a spirit, and asked her many questions regarding the mode of living in the spirit world, and her answers to my questions were perfectly idiotic. The spirit said that she went to schools and studied books.

I asked : 'What books do you read ? Can you mention the name of nay book you read ? 'No', she said, 'I do not know the names'.

Sometimes, however, I have noticed that telepathically my own thoughts and my own ideas and very expressions were reproduced as perfectly as if I were answering my own question. I was also pleased to hear the remarks which the spiritualistic mediums made after hearing my discourse on *Reincarnation*. Some of them congratulated me, and said : 'My spirit-guides have taught me exactly what you have explained'. But other mediums did not like the idea of reincarnation at all, because they had not learned it from their spirit-controls.

Supposing all the phenomena of spiritism to be true and genuine, what have the spiritualists gained by these communications outside of the satisfaction of their idle curiosity ? Have they learned any of the higher truths ? Have they understood any of the laws that govern the spiritual nature of man ? Have they known why human beings come to this earth and why they go away suddenly ? I have asked many of the mediums as well as their spirit-guids, and have found that they do not know anything regarding the origin of the soul. Their answers are always based upon the dogmas of Christian theology, which they learned in their childhood in Sunday schools. They say : 'God creates the soul at the time of birth, and the soul continues to exist for ever'. If one asks : 'How do you know that the soul did not exist before the birth of the body ?' They do not answer.

Although many of the spirit manifestations and spirit communications have been exposed as fraudulent and many of them can be explained by telepathy and thought-transference, still there are some genuine phenomena which cannot be explained by any other theory than that of the communication of the disembodied spirits. On many occasions, the audience is fooled by the spirits. Some of whom are neither wise nor truthful. In some cases, they take the appearance of some other spirit, and deceive the sitters. The poor and innocent mediums may not know that such tricks are played upon them by their dishonest spirit-guides, so they are not to be held responsible for the fraud in many cases ; but the spirits are to be blamed. Therefore, how can we expect to learn the absolute Truth from these spiritualists whose controls and guides themselves are ignorant, deceitful, and not wiser than the mediums ! Vain is the hope of those spiritualists who expect to know the absolute Truth through communications from earthbound spirits. In India, the seekers after the absolute Truth do not go to any spiritualistic medium to obtain knowledge of the soul or of God, because they are taught from their childhood that the spirits who do communicate with ordinary mortals through mediums, are ignorant and earthbound. They need our help more than they can help us in any way.

These seekers after truth do not seek wisdom from the Fathers or departed ancestors, because they know that the inhabitants of the spirit world or heaven or *pitriloka*, the realm of the Fathers, are not

perfect, but that they go there, being bound by desires to enjoy the fruits of their good works for some time, and at the expiration of that period, are forced to come down from that plane to the world ; * that eventually they are bound to reincarnate as human beings in order to fulfil the other human desires which are latent in them, and to reap such results of works, as are to be obtained on the human plane alone. No individual, remaining in the plane of human desires, can escape this wheel of birth and rebirth which covers all the stages between the highest heaven on one side and the earthly existence on the other. So long as desires remain in us, we are bound to go through the changeful conditions and existences, and meet such environments, as are subject

5. Vadarayana in his *Brahmasutra* (3.1.1-27) has mentioned how the soul, accompanied by the *mukhya prana* (chief vital air or spirit), the sense-organs and the mind and taking with itself nescience (*avidya*), moral good or ill-karma, and the impressions left by its previous existence, leaves its body (after death) and obtains a new body. In the 3.1.8 *sutra*, he says particularly :

कृतात्ययेऽनुशयवान् दृष्टस्मृतिभ्यां यथेतमनेवं च ।

Acharya Samkara in his commentary explains it. "the souls of those who perform sacrifices and the like, rise on the road, leading through smoke and so on, to the sphere of the moon, and when they have done with enjoyment (of the fruits of their works), again descend, having dwelt there, "yavatsampatam * * punaravartante yathetam,"—they return again that way as they came" etc. Again in connection with the *sutra* :

साभाव्यापत्तिरूपपतेः (३१।२२)

Samkara explained the method of descending of the souls, after quoting the text of the Upanishad : "They return again by the way they came, to the ether, from the ether to the air. Then the sacrificer, having become air becomes smoke, having become smoke he becomes mist, having become mist he becomes a cloud, having become a cloud he rains down." Vide also Max Muller : *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 175-180.

to change. Those, who enter into the heaven of the modern spiritualists, are similarly subject to the *law of karma*, or of cause and sequence, or of action and reaction. Being bound by that law, they must remain there, until they have reaped the results of their good deeds and good thoughts. They will then come down to this earth, and will be reincarnated again as human beings, in order to satisfy their human desires and human tendencies on the human plane. Cycle after cycle the individual souls remanifest themselves on different planes of existence, in accordance with their thoughts, desires, and works. They may go to the heaven of the *pitris*, or ancestors, or any other higher realm of the spirits.

Having understood this grand *law of karma*, the Vedanta philosophers and the seekers after absolute truth in India searched for that subtle path, by which the individual soul can escape the wheel of rebirth in this world, and transcend all laws and all stages of the phenomenal universe from the heaven of the spiritualists and ancestor-worshippers up to the highest realm of the *devas* or gods. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the Lord says :

‘Even the inhabitants of the highest heavens are subject to the laws of rebirth and reincarnation. He alone is free from birth and rebirth and transcends all phenomena, who, after knowing the absolute Truth and after realizing the supreme Spirit, becomes one with the Divinity.’⁶

The path, which leads to the realization of the absolute truth or to the abode of the eternal and unchangeable Reality of the universe, is different from

6. *Bhagavad-Gita*, VIII, 19.

that which leads to the realm of the fathers, or to the heaven of the spiritualists or the dualistic religions. The entrance into the heaven of the ancestor-worshippers depends upon good and righteous works. It comes as the effect of good thoughts and good deeds. But the performance of good works and good thoughts cannot produce as their result of the attainment of Godconsciousness, or as freedom or Divine realization or absolute truth, which is the highest ideal of all religions. No amount of good thoughts and deeds can produce as their effect which is beyond thoughts and mind, and, consequently, beyond the reach of their effects ; because Divine realization is not within the realm of the psychic phenomena, nor can it be reached by mind, intellect, and sense powers. The path which leads the individual soul to the realization of the Absolute, is neither through righteous works, nor through the belief in departed spirits, nor by the worship of the spirits of ancestors, but through the Self-knowledge or the knowledge of the relation which the individual soul bears to the universal spirit. That path is called in Vedanta the *devayana*, the divine path or the path which leads to Divinity.⁷ The travellers on this path

7. *Chandogya-Upanishad*, 5.10.3-4, and *Brhadaranyaka-Upanishad*, 6.2.15. In the 18th verse of the *Isha Upanishad* we find also : " *Agne naya supatha raye asmana*" etc. The word *supatha* means the *devayana* which is opposed to *daksina-marga* of the workers (*Karmis*), who perform sacrifices with the desire of going to heaven (or to some other higher *lokas*. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (8.24-25), there is also mention of the paths, *utarayana* and *daksinayana* :

अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।
 तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥
 धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायम् ।
 तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते ॥

are those who are the most sincere and earnest seekers after the Absolute. They do not care for phenomena, whether physical or psychic, whose souls soar high above the clouds of desires that cover the light of the spiritual sun in ordinary mortals ; but whose highest aim, loftiest aspiration and deepest longing of the soul are to realize that unchangeable truth which is beyond mind and intellect and which the fathers in the heavens of the spiritualists, cannot reach. We must go there in order to find the correct solution of all problems concerning life and death. True religion does not depend upon any of the psychical phenomena that are to be seen in seances, nor is it based upon ancestor-worship. Therefore the religion of Vedanta tells us not to seek Divine wisdom from the departed spirits, and not to waste our time and energy by going after them, because the result will not be successful. The spiritualists who seek the highest wisdom from communications with departed spirits, are deluded, and they do not know the limitations of those earthbound souls.

Such earthbound souls may take the form of a great wise man or a sage, and appear in a seance and pretend to give the highest truths, but sensible persons will easily find out how deceitful some of them are. We must be very careful in dealing with the spirits. I have seen people, who, after investigating spiritualism and seeing all these phenomena, have lost all faith, and have become atheistic in their ideas. The modern spiritualists are like babies in this line of thought. The seekers after Truth in India have searched, and gained experience for thousands of

years in studying the characters of the earthbound and also of the higher spirits. The Hindus do not allow anyone to become mediumistic. They say that those who go into that condition, are committing a great psychological crime, by making their own minds and bodies, which they have got for their own development, subject to the influences of other spirits for the fulfilment of their desires.

We know that the mediums get more or less moral and physical wrecks in the end. If spiritualism can enlighten the minds of people as they claim, why do we see that many of these mediums are ignorant and idiotic ? They do not understand the moral and spiritual laws that govern our souls. They have lost power of self-control. They cannot control the trance-like condition, when their animation is suspended and their mind, brain and the whole body are at the mercy of another power outside of themselves.

The will-power of the mediums is weak. Their vital energy, life-force and intellectual powers are used by other spirits which have control over them. Once I asked a good materializing medium, how she felt after coming out of the mediumistic condition ? She replied : 'I feel as though there were nothing in me, as if all vitality and life had been taken out of me. I cannot think or do anything for some time'. Is not this a pitiable condition ? It is for this reason in India, the Hindus do not encourage anyone to become a medium. On the contrary, if they find a person going into a mediumistic condition, they make strong efforts to bring him out of it. These

earthbound souls who are trying to get possession of weak-minded mortals, are delighted to find anyone who seeks their help.

The genuine phenomena of spiritism may do some good in the way of satisfying the curiosity of certain people, or of bringing the assurance that there is a life after death. They may foretell some petty, trivial events in connection with our business or daily life, but they cannot bring to us the highest wisdom and happiness which come to the soul through Divine communion. These spirits are not angels, as the spiritualists claim, but they are, in reality the earth-bound spirits. Modern spiritualism may encourage the hope of meeting the departed spirits of our friends and relatives, and may bring consolation in the minds of those that doubt their existence, but it cannot give us the realization of the absolute truth, or the attainment of Godconsciousness. It cannot lift us above the realm of the fathers or the ancestors who are dwelling in the *pitriloka*. The aim of the religion of the Vedanta, on the contrary, is to make the individual soul realize its own true nature, and to bring its reunion with the universal spirit and to transform it into the divine Being, which transcends all the limitations of time and space, all the laws which bind us to this earthly plane. The aim of the religion of the Vedanta is to make us realize the eternal Truth in this life, and to be perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect.

The attainment of Godconsciousness is the highest ideal of Vedanta. It shows the way, by which we can reach the ultimate goal of all religions, mani-

fest Divinity in the actions of our daily life, and becoming free from selfishness and independent of physical and mental conditions, how we may live as a living God. For this reason, it is said in Vedanta :

‘You may read the scriptures, or repeat scriptural passages day after day ; you may offer sacrifices, prayers and invocations to the spirits or angels for help, or worship the spirits of departed ancestors for wisdom and knowledge ; but so long as you do not realize the true nature of your Self, so long as you do not feel that reunion of the individual soul with the universal Spirit, you shall not attain to spiritual freedom and perfection.’⁸

कुरुते गङ्गासागरगमनं
 व्रतपरिपालनम् अथवा दानम् ।
 ज्ञानविहीने सर्वमनेन
 मुक्तिर्न भवति जन्मशतेन ॥

CHAPTER TWELVE

SPIRITUALISM AND ANCESTOR-WORSHIP

What modern spiritualism has taught—Eucharist of the Christians—The worship of the spirits—Hindu believe in spirits—The religions of the spiritualists—Fraudulance of the mediums and the spirits—Idiotic answers from the spirits—Mediums can be controlled by anyone—Mediumship in India—Realms of the fathers are not permanent—Inhabitants of the highest heavens cannot escape the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Modern spiritualism, claiming its supernatural origin like all the great religions of the world that have come down to us from ancient times with a claim upon, and being revealed by supernatural beings, has played a most important part in toning down the dogmas of Christian theology, and in reforming the religious beliefs of the vast majority of minds of Western people, and also in starting fresh questions and investigations into the realms beyond the grave. Within the last fifty years, modern spiritualism has succeeded in giving wonderful demonstrations in regard to disembodied spirits after the dissolution of their gross physical forms, and has brought comfort and consolation to the hearts of many, who had been suffering from the effects of dry theories of the atheistic and agnostic thinkers of the last century.

Through modern spiritualism many have arrived at the belief that there is such a thing as soul which continues to exist after death of this physical body. Modern spiritualism has taught them that these souls, or spirits of the departed ones are not doomed to suffer eternally, but are situated comfortably, and do

not forget their relatives and friends. It further teaches that many of these spirits are like guardian angels, watching over their beloved ones and struggle hard to help them in every way possible.

Modern spiritualism has taken away that horror of the post-mortem condition of life, and has thus enabled human minds to look at death as the threshold of that wonderful realm, the inhabitants of which enjoy new life, new pleasures and new experiences, having thus established a firm belief in a life after death. Modern spiritualism has claimed to lay foundation of the true religion upon the experiences, gained through the communications of those spiritualistic mediums, or under the direction of those wise ones who visit spiritualistic seances, whether private or professional, with a desire to enlighten the minds of the sitters, by imparting knowledge of supernatural things.

The attempts of modern spiritualism, to establish the foundation of the true religion upon the experiences, received through these communications, remind us of the ancient days, when the primitive races struggled hard to see a ray of light in the thick darkness that hid from their sight the realm beyond the threshold of death. In fact, modern spiritualism carries us back to that age, when the uncultured minds of the primitive people wanted to keep up the memory of their departed friends and dead relatives, and after seeing the ghost-like apparitions of the departed, they believed in a life after death. They believed that their ancestors were living, and they tried to please them by doing such acts as they

liked most, when they were on this earth in flesh and blood.¹

Many of these scholars maintain that this kind of ancestor-worship was the beginning of all great religions that claim a supernatural origin. Ancestor-worship, as we all know, means a kind of belief in the spirits of the departed ones and in the supernatural powers which they possess as well as in the constant remembrance of those spirits in our minds. Resignation of the will under their direction will rouse the sympathy and kindly feelings for those who are left behind them.

Among the ancient religions of the world we find traces of this ancestor-worship among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Chinese and Hindus and other races that inhabit different parts of the world. Among the ancient Egyptians we find a belief similar to that of the modern spiritualists. They believed that within the body of human beings there was a kind of being, similar in form to human beings, with similar hands, feet, and all other parts of the body, and it was something like the 'double' of the physical man. This counterpart or 'double' went out of the body and lived, and, according to their belief, the life of this

1. There was a common belief among the tribes of the Bantu stock of Africa, among the Zulus the Thonga and other Caffre tribes of the South Africa, the Ngoni of British Central Africa, the —abondel, the Masai, the Suk, the Nandi, the Akikuyu of German and British East Africa, the Dinkas of the Upper Nile, the Betsileo and other tribes of Madagascar, the Iban or Sea Dyakas of Borneo, and even among the Romans and Greeks that "the dead come to life and revisit their old homes in the shape of serpents" and other animal forms—Vide J. G. Frazer : *The Golden Bough* (3rd ed.), part IV, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Vol. I, pp. 82-107.

double or counterpart depended upon the physical form of the human beings.

If any part of this physical form was injured, the similar part of the double or counterpart would also be injured. It is for this reason the Egyptians cared so much for the dead bodies of their ancestors, and preserved them by making them into mummies. The pyramids were built for the purpose of preserving the mummies or the dead bodies.² The Egyptians had the belief that so long as these physical forms would remain perfect, this double would remain perfect and intact. The ancient Babylonians had a belief in a little different from that of the Egyptians. They preserved the dead bodies, embalmed them, and built tombs over them, putting flowers, wreaths and flags over the graves. This is practised in these days in Europe and America, and is a remnant of the ancestor-worship of the Babylonians. The religion of the Chinese is ancestor-worship. The Parsees of the ancient days believed in departed spirits, and called them *fravashis* or fathers. They invoked

2. A. W. Benn mentions in this connection : "What we have now to examine is the general condition of popular belief, as evinced by the character of the funeral monuments, erected in the time of the empire. Our authorities are agreed in stating that the majority of these bear witness to a widespread and ever-growing faith in immortality, sometimes conveyed under the form of inscriptions, sometimes under that of figured reliefs, sometimes more naively signified by articles placed in the tomb for use in another world. 'I am waiting for my husband,' is the inscription placed over his dead wife by one who was, like her, an enfranchised slave. Elsewhere a widow 'commends her departed husband to the gods of the underworld, and prays that they will allow his spirit to revisit her in the hours of the night.' 'In death thou art not dead,' are the words deciphered on one mouldering stone. 'No', says a father to a son whom he had lost in Numidia, 'thou hast not gone down to the abode of the Manes but risen to the stars

these spirits, prayed to them, and asked help and blessings of them.

According to the belief of the Parsees, the spirits of the righteous people had been raised to the ranks of arch-angels and guardian angels. The Parsees used to offer food, and sacrifices in the names of the departed fathers, and called upon them whenever they wished anything of a supernatural nature. Thus we see that this ancestor-worship gave a foundation to the religions of the Parsees as well as to the Babylonians, the Chinese and the Egyptians. In Judaism and Mohammedanism, traces of this worship are discovered by modern scholars.

The Hebrew word *elohim*, which is translated as God, is used with the meaning of departed spirit. The Witch of Endor saw *elohim* come out of the

of heaven'. At Doxato, near Philippi in Macedonia, a mother has graven on the tomb of her child: We are crushed by a cruel blow, but thou hast renewed thy being and art dwelling in the Elysian fields'. This conception of the future world as a heavenly and happy abode where human souls are received into the society of the gods, recurred with especial frequency in the Greek epitaphs, but is also met with in Latin-worship countries.'

'Originally, peculiar to Greece, where it still exists under a slightly altered form this superstition penetrated into the West at a comparatively early period. Thus in the tombs of Comperia alone many hundred skeletons have been found with bronze coins in their mouths, placed there to pay them passage across the Styx; and explorations at present show that this custom reaches back to the middle of the fourth century B.C. We also learn from Lucian that, in his time, the old animistic beliefs were entertained to the extent of burning or burying the cloths, ornaments, and other appurtenances of deceased persons along with their bodies, under the idea that the owners required them for use in the other world; and it is so much deposits that our museums of classical antiquity owe the greater part of their contents.—(Vide *The Greek Philosophers* (1914), pp. 503-504).

earth. Do we not find a trace of the ancestor-worship when we read in the Samuel :

‘And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance ?’³

The sacrifices that are made in the name of God, originated from the belief that the departed spirits have hunger and thirst just as much as when they were in flesh and blood. This offering of food and drink gradually developed into sacrifices.

The communion and offering of thanks and Eucharist of the Christians are only the relics of the ceremonies in connection with ancestor-worship. The chants and praises that were offered by the primitive people to commemorate their ancestors and to describe the heroic deeds and virtues of the departed spirits, gradually developed into the hymns of praise which we have today.⁴

3. Vide *Samuel I* Ch, XXVIII, 14,

Rev. A. W, Oxford also says : ‘Since we find the graves of the ancestors of Israel situated on mountains (Numb. XX, 28 ; Josh. XXIV, 30) or connected with places where there stood either a tree or a stone (Gen. XXIII, 17 ; XXXV, 8-20 ; Numb. XX 1 ; Josh. XXIV, 32), it is impossible to avoid the conclusion to which we are led by many other considerations that the pre-Jehovistic worship was that of ancestors’—*Religious Systems of the World* (1901), pp. 56-57.

He further mentions : ‘From the worship of holy stones and trees arose the *messeba*, or holy pillars, and the *aschera*, or holy poles 4 4 The *teraphim*, used apparently, like the ephod, as oracles (Ezek. XXI, 21 ; Hos. III, 4), may have been images of ancestors as they were of the size and shape of a man (Sa^m. XIX, 13). The theory that they were images of ancestors is supported by Gdn. XXXI, 19’—*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

4. Prof. Sayace similarly found ancestor-worship and Shamanism (a low form of ghost propitiation) at the root of the religion of the ancient Accadians. Similar customs have been traced among the Greeks and Amazulu, among the Hebrews and the Nicaraguans, among ancient English people (Britains), Digger Indians, and the primitive people of the Andaman Islands. (Vide Menzies : *History of Religion*, pp. 111-113).

Both Christ and Mohammed believed in departed spirits and angels, good and evil. They received revelations through these angels who were righteous and holy. Amongst the Mohammedans we find that they erect mosques and tombs. These graves are regarded as the holy places, and are visited by pilgrims from time to time. In India, this belief in the departed spirits played an important part in shaping the religious ideals of the Hindus ; and that belief found its expression in the most ancient scriptural writings. In the Vedas, we read that these spirits of the fathers were invited to accept the offerings of food and drink at the time of the *shraddha* ceremony.⁵ When a person dies after a fortnight or a month, all the relatives gather to do good works, and perform sacrifices in the name of that departed spirit. They feed the poor, and give wealth and make charity, etc. The word *shraddha* means doing good in the memory of some one. One of the daily duties of the Hindu householder is to spend a few minutes in thinking of the departed ancestors and in doing certain good acts in their name, giving something to the poor and feeding the hungry or giving clothes to the needy. The Hindus believe that these good acts, when done in the name of the departed spirits, are a help to the spirits in their onward progress.

According to the Hindu belief, every mortal after death remains earthbound for sometime, and those spirits who are in that condition, seek help of the living ones, the descendants, relatives and friends, to

5. *Vide Notes.*

free them from the earthbound condition. The good deeds and good thoughts, performed in the memory of the departed ones, help them, giving them chances of getting out of that earthbound condition, and gradually they rise in the realm of the fathers, where they stay and reap the results of the good works, either done by themselves, or performed in their name by the descendents, friends and relatives. The realm of the fathers was discovered by the first mortal who by good works succeeded in finding the path to that realm, and afterwards became the ruling god of those who came later. This is called the *pitriloka*. Those who have read the *Katha* and other *Upanishads*, are familiar with this name. This realm extended all the comforts of life to those who reached there. This realm of the fathers is the heaven, the ideal place of the ancestor-worshippers as well as the heaven of the modern spiritualists, even though they do not call it by that name.

The religion of the spiritualists, whether ancient or modern, cannot describe that state, in which their ancestors live. That religion cannot take us beyond that realm, and cannot give us anything beyond the belief that after our death, we shall meet our departed friends, and live and rejoice with them for ever, and enjoy happiness in that heavenly condition. But this heaven of the ancestor-worshippers and of the modern spiritualists is not the highest heaven. Where the heaven of the ancestor-worshippers and modern spiritualists ends, there begins the foundation of the true religion, which leads to the abode of the eternal Truth, which is beyond all laws, all

psychic conditions, all pleasures, and all comforts of life.

After ages of investigation the Hindu sages and seers of Truth have discovered that this realm of the fathers is not the eternal abode of Truth. It is phenomenal, and the inhabitants of this realm are not free, but bound by desires for pleasures and comforts of life. They are subject to the *law of karma* of cause and effect, of action and reaction, and their stay on this plane is temporary, although it may last for thousands of years. They went deeper than the modern spiritualists, and by investigating the conditions of life in that realm, they saw what conditions are connected with their stay in that realm.

The ancient seers amongst the Hindus saw that these fathers cannot get beyond that realm, cannot rise on the plane of Divinity, do not understand the divine Truth, and, consequently, cannot be the teachers of divine Truth. Having realized this the seers of Truth amongst the Hindus warned their disciples, followers, and seekers after Truth in general not to waste their energies and time in asking help of those who cannot know truths beyond the psychic plane and who are within the phenomenal world, and cannot rise on the plane of Divinity.

Disregarding the remarks and warnings of those ancient seers of Truth, modern spiritualists seek wisdom and knowledge of Divine things from the disembodied spirits, and try their best to gain favour of the departed ones, with the hope that they will learn something about God and the true nature of the soul and the relation of the individual soul to the universal

spirit. They try to lay the foundation of true religion, depending entirely upon the knowledge, gathered from the communications of some foolish, idiotic and earthbound spirits of the dead. The Hindus wonder how sensible persons can sit night after night in public seances, and listen to the senseless prattle of those ignorant spirits who do not know anything, and cannot understand or teach us anything about the higher truths of our life.

Having spent some time with the mediums of all kinds that exist in America, I have not met a single medium or spirit who could answer satisfactorily any of the questions which I asked them regarding the life after death, or regarding the true nature of the individual soul or its relation to the universal spirit. On the contrary, I heard many spirits say, when asked these questions : 'You yourself can answer these questions better than we can'. Sometimes I heard many spirits refer to me, when some questions were asked by other sitters. I was amused to hear some spirit say in a materializing seance last summer, and it was the spirit control of the medium who appeared, and the first thing the spirit offered was this : 'Oh, here is a thinking-box, how can we talk before him ?' I did not understand what was meant, and afterwards I found this expression was used in reference to me.

On another occasion, I asked a spirit many questions regarding the life after death, and was amused to hear the most idiotic answers I had ever heard in my life. These spirits would come and talk about certain things, but, on some occasions, I noticed that some of

the answers were nothing but the reproductions of my thoughts, my ideas, and my familiar expressions, and they were telepathically reproduced as perfectly as though I was answering my own questions. On some other occasions, when I was lecturing on reincarnation, the mediums who came to hear me, spoke their opinions after lecture. Some came, and said to me : 'My guide teachers exactly what you have explained this afternoon'. This guide taught them reincarnation, but other mediums disliked it very much. They came and said : 'This is a horrible idea'. I heard so many conflicting opinions that I cannot describe them now. Some would say : 'Reincarnation is the only solution of life', and other spirits would say differently. If they know everything, why should they not teach it ? Why should their opinions be so conflicting ?

How can you expect to know the ultimate truth and reality of the universe, the nature of our true self and its relation to God from these spirits, who are no better than the mediums themselves ? As the mediums can be controlled by anyone, so their spirit controls are simple beings that cannot explain anything of a higher order. Supposing that these spiritualistic seances had been proved to be true, what have the spiritualists learned from these communications beyond a kind of satisfaction of idle curiosity and beyond the means of earning a livelihood ? Have they learned any of the higher truths of nature ? Have they learned the true nature of their own selves ? Have they understood why their ancestors lived in heaven, and how long they can stay ?

Many times I asked these questions, but their answers were merely based on those ideas and dogmas of Christian theology, which they learned in their childhood. They believed that the souls were created at the time of their birth, and would continue to exist, but they denied the existence of hell-fire. Although many of these spirit manifestations and communications have been explained by telepathy and thought transference, still there is some genuine phenomena which cannot be explained by any other theory than the theory of departed spirits.

In India, of course, we do not allow our friends to become mediums ; rather we think it is a disease. If one becomes mediumistic, it is very hard to get out of that condition. We do not allow public seances, because we have more respect for our ancestors and departed friends, and we do not wish to make money at the expense of these spirits. We would rather die of privations than bring down those spirits and ask them for help in the way of living and making money.

The Hindus, of course, do not care so much for these kind of seekers after truth. They do not go to the spiritualistic mediums and to public seances, because they have been taught from their childhood that these spirits, who do communicate, are ignorant and earthbound, and they need our help more than they can help us. They pray, and send good thoughts to them, and try to do good acts in their name, so that they would be released from their earthbound condition.

The seekers after truth do not ask any favour of

their ancestors who live in the realm of the fathers, because they know that those who live in that realm, are not perfect, but they are bound by desires, they go to enjoy certain pleasures, and at the expiration of a certain period they are forced to come down from that heaven,⁵ because that heaven is not permanent, and no one can stay there eternally ; it is in the realm of phenomena and when they are forced to come down, they are forced by their own desires which are already latent in themselves. When they are awakened by their desires, they are forced to come down to the human plane, to reap the results of those acts which were performed on this plane, and to have the fruits of the works which can be obtained on the human plane alone.

No individual, living on the plane of human desires, can escape birth and rebirth or reincarnation, because the desires are the cause of our rebirths. All are responsible for their destiny. If we have different desires, we will have different fruits, and we will go to different planes. Cycle after cycle these individual souls re-manifest themselves on different planes of existence. They exist between the highest heaven, and the earthly life reap the results of their works, and fulfil the purposes of life, by going to different planes and by enjoying the different fruits and results of these works.

The wheel of birth and death, rebirth or reincarnation covers all the stages that exist between the highest heaven of the gods and the plane of the

5. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. IX, 20-21.

human beings. We are going up and down according to our desires.

Having discovered this grand law, the seekers after Truth did not stop there. They searched for that path by which the individuals may escape this wheel of rebirth or reincarnation and reach that state from which there is no return. They transcend all phenomena and go beyond the realm of the Fathers.

It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* :

'All the realms, beginning with the highest heaven, are phenomenal. Inhabitants, therefore, are subject to the laws of cause and effect, or of action and reaction ; on one is free from those laws. He alone is free who has transcended phenomena, and who, after knowing Truth, has become Truth, and who, realizing the supreme Spirit, has become one with that Spirit.¹

The path which leads to that realization of the absolute Truth is different from that path that leads to the realm of the fathers or the heaven of the spiritualists. The path that leads to the heaven of the spiritualists and ancestor-worshippers is called the *pitriyana* i.e. the path of the ancestors, and that is the heaven of the fathers.² But the other path which leads to the realization of Truth is different from this

1. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. VIII, 16.

2. *Pitriyana* is known as the *dhuma-marga*, the dark way of the fathers. In the *Chandogya*, *Brhadaranyaka*, *Katha*, *Prasna* and other *Upanishads*, and in the *Bhagavad Gita*, it has been described nicely. But its seed we find often in hymns of the Rig Veda used with a sacrificial instead of a funeral connotation :

पन्थानमनप्रविशत् पितृयानम् (५।२७)

(RV. V, 2.7), i.e., 'O Agni, you are born of earth and sky (*diava-prthvi*),
4 4 You know the definite path to the *pitrløke*, there, be thou so bright as to illumine that path'.

the attainment of Godconsciousness. The aim of true religion is to bring the individual soul into union with the divine Spirit, and to make each soul realize that reunion with the Spirit, making that soul free from the bondage and desires and longing for pleasures and happiness. He who has attained to that realization, is free from ignorance and selfishness and from all other imperfections. He does not go to a spirit for knowledge, but finds all knowledge within himself. He goes to the fountainhead of all knowledge and draws the water of knowledge from that source. Spirits cannot teach such things, and fathers, or ancestors cannot teach him who has realized his oneness with the supreme Being. Such a soul is emancipated and is perfect as the Father of the universe is perfect. He is a living God upon this earth.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SPIRITUALISTIC MEDIUMSHIP

Modern spiritualism have opened a new field for scientific investigation—Sceptics and agnostics have no faith—Death-blow to hell-fire by modern spiritualists—*Developing Circle*—The method of sittings in the seances—The best results of mediumship—The spirit and the medium—Spirit-control—What the spirits do when they gain control over the medium—A hypnotic sleep—Trances of the mediums—*Materializing mediumship*—Ectoplasm—Genuine and fraudulent materializations—The process of materialization—The materializing trance—Is it beneficial for the mortals to develop mediumship—Mediumship does not signify any gift or special talent—Manifestation of the spirits through the mediumistic channels—Mediums lose their power of self-control—A high state of mediumship—Evil effects of mediumistic development—The true Yogi in India.

The phenomena of the modern spiritualism have opened a new field for scientific investigation, and have inspired earnest men and women of Europe and America with a desire to communicate with their departed friends and relatives. Sceptics and agnostics, who had no faith in a life after death, have discovered some truths about future life, through the genuine communications of the disembodied spirits. They have learnt that the death of the body is not the end of the soul-life, but, on the contrary, it is only the threshold of that wonderland, where the spirits of the dead continue to exist and enjoy new experience and new pleasure.

Modern spiritualism, as has been said before, has given a deathblow to the hell-fire doctrines and other dogmas of Christian theology as well as to the theory that the souls of men are destined to suffer eternally. It has demonstrated the fact that the spirits of our dead friends and relatives are anxious to inform us

that they are comfortable, and that they take great interest in our mundane affairs, and are always ready to direct us in the right path, and help us by giving good counsels, and protect us from dangers and misfortunes which often threaten us from distance. These and many other beliefs of similar nature have been maintained by the majority of spiritualists who try to communicate with their departed friends by developing mediumistic conditions. We are all familiar with the process of developing mediumship. Those who wish to become mediums, seek the company of other friends who have the same desire. They form themselves into a circle which is known as the *developing circle*. They are told by other mediums or their spirit-guides to select a definite room, where they should sit as often as possible at least once a week, but the sittings must be at the same hour and in the same evening of the week. They must begin each sitting promptly at the hour agreed upon, because the spirits are just as busy as we are here constantly discharging our duties and obligations. So they must make previous appointments, and come exactly at the appointed moment to help in the developing process. It requires at least 5 or 6 sittings to magnetize the atmosphere of the room, and when it is thoroughly magnetized, the developing process of mediumship will begin. The sittings must be held in absolute darkness. As a dark room is indispensable to a photographer who wishes to develop a negative, so it is absolutely necessary for one who wishes to be a medium. Here we should remember that the mediumship is a negative condi-



~ if it is manifesting in a materialised form,
with the help of the Medium.




The Spirit is manifesting his figure
(On the right side, the Medium is seen

tion of mind and body which can be easily brought about, if the sitters do not think of anything, but remain passive and simply hold a receptive attitude as if waiting to get something. The darkness which cuts off physical vision, being the negative pole of light, will naturally help in quieting the sense activities and in bringing them into an absolutely negative state. Soft sweet music is very helpful in the developing process, but the sitters themselves should not be the performers of music, because the very efforts to sing requires a positive will and activity of the mind. Among the sitters those who are of the negative type, should alternate with those of the positive tendency. During this time, the sitters must not think of anything, and must not ask any questions, but surrender themselves to the will of their invisible controls, and calmly wait for the wonderful results of the developing process.

The best results of the mediumship will come to those among the sitters who have been able to surrender absolutely their body, mind and will to the will of the spirit-controls. Gradually the spiritual intelligences will control the will, the volitional powers, and sensory organism of the medium. This control may be partial or complete. Partial control may be over a certain part of the brain or any particular organ or any nerve centre or any limb or muscle of the body. The partial control can be divided into two general classes : the one, conscious, and the other, unconscious. Each of them again can be subdivided into various other classes, in accordance with the phenomena. There are many men and women throughout

the country, who have some of their mental functions partially under the control of some outside spiritual intelligences, from whom they occasionally receive messages in the form of certain impressions, of which they are not conscious, but they do not lose consciousness of their bodies, or of their surroundings. In this conscious impressional mediumship, one may speak or write about things which one does not know or understand. Some of these classes are known as inspirational speakers and writers. But the other class includes those mediums, who are not conscious of any outside spiritual control which partially influences their minds. They will speak and write not knowing under whose control they are speaking and writing. There are some who partially become unconscious of their bodies and surroundings at the time of speaking or writing. Partial control of the muscles and nerve centres leads to a variety of mediumship. Planchette writing, Ouija Board manipulating, automatic writing, clairvoyance, and clairaudience are but some of the different phenomena of the muscular and neurotic mediumship. When a spirit controls the muscles of the arms, the medium can move heavy weights. When the optic nerves and the retinae are controlled, the medium is able to see pictures or images, which are presented to their consciousness by their spirit controls. Similarly, when the nervous organism of ear and auditory nerves are controlled by the spirit, the mediums can hear such sounds, which their controls desire them to hear. In the same manner, partial control can be over other senses like smell, taste, or touch. Some are con-



scious, while others are unconscious of this control. This partial control generally leads to fuller and more complete control, if the sitters continue the developing process. Complete control over the mind and body of the medium is manifested in trance mediumship. Its phenomena are varied and extremely attractive, because this kind of mediumship is of a mysterious character. The medium is generally thrown in a state of deep sleep, which resembles the hypnotic sleep. Whatever happens in this state, the medium is unconscious of. The controlling agents have absolute domination over the physical instrument of the medium. The spirits can use the vocal organs of the medium, or any other organ at their will. The will and the volitional powers of the medium are thrown into absolute suspension. Through the body of the medium the spirits can speak or perform any phenomenon, without producing any impression upon the conscious being of the medium. Just as a patient in a hypnotic sleep may talk or walk or eat or dance or do any other act, being under the perfect control of the will-power and suggestion of the operator, but not remembering any of those acts or words after coming back to normal consciousness, so a trance medium does not remember about what transpired during the state of trance.

There are many such trance mediums among the spiritualists in every country. This trance mediumship may gradually develop into what is called *materializing mediumship*. The medium goes into a state of profound trance. The spirit controls who are expert in the art of materializing understand the

process. They can draw the vital and magnetic energies out of the medium's physical and mental organisms, and combine them with the external non-composite elements and attenuated matter (*ectoplasm*)¹ and produce phenomena which can be perceived by the sitters.

Of course, there are many fraudulent materializations which have been exposed again and again in America, as also in Europe. But there are also genuine materializations, some of which I have seen with my own eyes and have carefully examined in every possible way which I could use under those circumstances. I have been called to come inside the cabinet of a seance where I felt at least twenty hands on my back, some pulling my collar, sash and some putting hands on my back all at the same time. Then one of the spirits spoke : 'Do you think that the medium has been doing all these ?' It was absolutely dark in the cabinet, although there was a dim light shaded by a wooden box in a corner of the room. The same voice then said : 'Put your hands on the medium,' and pulling my hands placed them on the medium. And I felt the stiff limbs of the medium whose hands were tied across tightly with a thick cord seated on a

1. Sir Arthus Conan Doyle says : '* * * the witnesses averred that certain people, whom they called 'materializing mediums', had the strange physical gift that they could put forth from their bodies a viscous, gelatinous substance which appeared to differ from every known form of matter in that it could solidify, and be used for material purposes, and yet could be reabsorbed, leaving absolutely no trace even upon the clothes which it had traversed in leaving the body.

This substance was actually touched by some enterprising investigations, who reported that it was elastic and appeared to be sensitive, as though it was really an organic extrusion from the medium's body.'

rocking chair in an inclined position in a dead trance. I have held the materialized hand of an American Indian spirit which melted away in my hand. I have also seen the genuine materialization of a friend of mine who was a native of Calcutta.

Few people understand the process of materialization². There have been many instances in every country, where spirits have materialized themselves without the help of any medium.

The vital and magnetic energies of the medium as also of the sitters give the foundation of all the phenomena that take place in a materializing seance. I have talked with the materializing mediums, and have asked them how they felt after the seance was over. Invariably they have answered that as if their whole system was empty, as if there was neither life nor vitality left in them, and as if everything was taken out of their mind and body. They cannot think or show any mental activity in their waking state. Is it not the most pitiable condition? Undoubtedly these trance mediums may be called martyrs. Through ignorance, they sacrifice their vital energy and will-powers upon the altar of spiritualistic phenomena, which ultimately wreck them physically, mentally and morally, and which stop the growth and evolution of their souls. There are other

2. "The materialization process consists of two factors, one of which is the simple spontaneous secretion and formation of this material for the production of forms, images, and living organs.

"* * but whatever may be laws and forces governing materializations, the medium's *psyche* must be brought in as a determining, or at least, as a contributing, factor."—B. V. Schrenck Notzing : *Phenomena of Materialization*, p. 282.

kinds of materializing trance : painting mediums, trumpet mediums and independent slate-writing mediums. There is still another kind of trance control which was known in olden times as possession, or obsession but which is now recognized as a kind of insanity by the medical practitioners.

All these and various other phenomena of mediumship are now admitted and are scientifically demonstrated facts. Various theories have been formulated to explain these phenomena.³ Most of the theories outside of the spiritualistic theory however have proved to be insufficient.

The majority of people, who have experienced the phenomena manifested through genuine mediums, cannot deny that the disembodied spirits can communicate with the living mortals, can materialize themselves under certain conditions, and can perform various other phenomena. Now, the question arises

3. 'The most important objective performances of the mediumship may be divided into two main groups :

(1) **TELEKINETIC PHENOMENA** : This class comprises every sort of action upon inanimate objects without contact, such as oscillations, the moving of tables (attraction and repulsion), the levitation of objects (raising and suspension), inflations and motions of a curtain, the mechanics of motion connected with the so-called 'apports', and finally the generation of musical notes and noises at a distance (including raps and other auditory impressions). Also effects upon musical instruments, direct writing in a word, all forms of action at a distance no matter whether in their case the manner of production by the mediumistic force was the same.

(2) - **TELEPLASTIC PHENOMENA** : This group includes the so-called materialisation phenomena of the spiritists, i.e., the production of forms and materials of organic or even inorganic matter, in accordance with definite conception and thought images of the medium, which may have their origin in the memory, or in the psychic under-currents of the medium, in the mentality of one of the witnesses, or (in the spiritistic sense) in forces and intelligences outside the medium.'—Notzing : *Phenomena of Materialisation*, p. 13.

whether it is beneficial for the mortals to develop mediumship and become mediums ; shall we encourage the spiritualists who develop mediumship ? We have already seen that mediumship means a receptive or negative state of the mind and body. If a person be positive, it will be extremely difficult for him or her to become a good medium. Therefore all persons under all circumstances cannot develop mediumship. It is true that there are some who are born mediumistic or naturally negative, and they can easily throw themselves under the control of any living or disembodied being. Mediumship does not signify any gift or special talent or power from higher spiritual intelligence. Those who think so, are mistaken. Strictly speaking, the word development should not be used in connection with mediumship. Because mediumship is a subjective process of making the mind and body passive, and of surrendering the will and volitional powers to some external influence which controls the organism of the medium, while development means a gradual unfolding of the positive powers which are latent in the soul by the natural process of evolution. The latter is constructive, while the former is destructive. A medium, who appears to be inspired in a semi-trance or full trance condition, does not show any power of his or her own, which may be called a gift or inspiration. It is not the power of the medium that makes him or her appear as inspired, but, on the contrary, will-power and intellectual faculties of the medium are suspended, controlled, and kept in abeyance by the controlling spirit who uses the mind and organism

which are passively surrendered to the will of the spirit. It is a gift of the medium of the spirit. Therefore, it cannot be called development.

A medium who becomes absolutely negative or passive in mind and body, becomes subject to all the surrounding influences of the earthbound spirits who are constantly seeking opportunity to control, and make some victims, and thus through ignorance a medium opens a psychic field which is dominated by the will of these earthbound spirits. Many of us have seen scores of spirits who manifest themselves in a single seance, and how eager they seem to manifest. If that door is once opened, it will be difficult to prevent those foreign influences from tormenting and eating up the vital energy of the innocent and foolish medium. I know several cases of persons who were at one time mediumistic, but who now suffer terribly from foreign influences and find it hard to overcome them even after constant efforts. Therefore, mediumship under no circumstances is a desirable state, nay, it is criminal to surrender one's own will and mind and body to the whims of some earthbound spirits. Some of the mediums are tempted by the idea that they may develop the power of seeing or hearing at a distance, or things which will happen in future. But they forget that those who have become clairvoyant by the subjective process of mediumship, do not and cannot see or hear whatever they desire to see clairvoyantly or hear clairaudiently. They can see only those things which their controls wish them to see or hear. They are absolutely at the mercy of their controls, just as hypnotic subjects are

at the mercy of their operator's will and suggestion. It is a well-known fact that the mediums gradually lose their power of self-control. They become more and more nervous, and this nervousness sometimes culminates into nervous prostration. Brain-diseases of various kinds, loss of vital energy and animal magnetism, continuous insanity, and short life are the evil effects of mediumship.

A high state of mediumship means, therefore, a degenerated mental condition on the part of the medium. The mediums generally suffer from loss of memory. They cannot concentrate their minds on one subject for any length of time. They cannot think or reason consecutively. They lose the strength of their will-power, and show irritable disposition. They become vain and egoistic and extremely selfish. They become strong in animal passions and animal desires. Some of the mediums become immoral, dishonest and untruthful.

Statistics have shown that 74 per cent of the professional mediums develop abnormal animal passions. Nearly 60 per cent become hysterical, 85 per cent suffer from nervous irritability, 58 per cent develop fraud and dishonesty and 95 per cent show lack of moral discrimination and courage, while 70 per cent develop vanity and selfishness.

Such are some of the evil effects of mediumistic development. Shall we now wonder why the seers of Truth in India so strongly object to one's becoming medium? Shall we wonder why Vedanta philosophy does not approve of spiritualistic mediumship? The Yogis in India never allow their students

to go into negative or passive condition. They do not deny that we can communicate with the earth-bound spirits or departed ancestors, but they know that to become a medium is a destructive process, and not a constructive one. But they have discovered a system called Raja Yoga, in which they describe all these wonderful phenomena, which can be obtained scientifically without going into a negative state, or without surrendering the will and mind to any disembodied spirit.

A Yogi develops his power of clairvoyance and clairaudience by a positive method through the practice of concentration and meditation. He can see or hear anything at any time and anywhere. When he attains to superconscious state, all the bright and intelligent spirits come to serve him, and obey his commands. He is not a slave of the discarnate spirits, but he is a master. A true Yogi is a medium of the supreme universal Spirit who is omnipotent and omniscient, while a spiritualistic medium is under the control of an earthbound spirit who is ignorant and imperfect. No medium has ever gained spiritual wisdom, nor has understood the higher laws which govern our souls through the communication of departed spirits, while a true Yogi, who has reached superconscious state, has attained perfect knowledge and reached Godconsciousness. He is the ideal of nations. He is like Christ, Buddha and Ramakrsna. He attains to perfection even in this life, while a spiritualistic medium losing all self-control sacrifices a great opportunity of unfolding spiritual nature, and remains in the darkness of

ignorance, and after death joins with their controls and enjoy or suffer, according to their thoughts and deeds. A true Yogi, on the other hand, having reached perfection in this life transcends the realm of the departed spirits, goes beyond heaven and attains to omniscience and everlasting Bliss.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AUTOMATIC SLATE-WRITING

Experience in a seance—Automatic writing—Visit to the famous slate-writing medium Mr. Keeler—The writing in the slate by unseen hands—Electric shock in arms—Writings were in four different languages—Swami Yogananda's hand-writing—A voice came in another seance—Materialized body of Babu Balaram Basu—Questions to him—Voice of Swami Yogananda.

In the year 1899 I was invited to lecture before Spiritualistic Camp Meeting at Lily Dale near Chattaqua in the State of New York, U.S.A. I spoke on *The Religion of the Hindus* and on *Reincarnation*. The meeting was held in the Auditorium the sides of which were open and the seats were occupied by those who were interested in spiritualism. I was the speaker on the anniversary day, when, according to the number of tickets sold at the gate the attendance, was calculated to be seven thousand who came to hear me. Among this vast audience there were mediums of all kinds present at my lecture. After hearing my lectures, many of the mediums said that their spirit guides taught the same truth which I was teaching, and they extended their courtesy to me by inviting me to their seances. On the 4th of August 1899, I attended a seance, where I saw automatic typewriting on a typewriter. Everybody gave the names of their departed friends, who might communicate with them. I also gave the name of my departed Gurubhai 'Jogen'. In reply I received the name 'Jogen' written with a blue pencil. This aroused my curiosity and I wanted to find out who wrote it.



The face of the Spirit has been materialised with the help of the Octoplasm of the Medams.

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 12 12 1909
 W. C. C.

ॐ शं जगदस्त यत् खगल्लिङ्गं
 ΑΓΡΕΡΑΣ ΕΙΣΑΡΡΕΙΣ ΗΘΥΡΕΜΟΙ
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 ΟΥΡΑΥΙΣ ΗΕ ΜΟΤΕΘΙΣ ΟΥΡΑΥΙΣ
 ΕΙΣ 56 ΑΔΕΝΩ:

All are with me I cannot write
 much. This is a stamp.

The Spirit-Slate-writing of Swami Yogananda.



Numerous faces of the Spirits by the side of the Medium.

Next morning, on August 5th at 10 o'clock, I had the invitation to pay a visit to the famous independent slate-writing medium Mr. Keeler. After a few minutes I went in the sitting room and sat near the window in front of Mr. Keeler on a rocking chair. The sunlight was coming through the window. In the space between us, was a small square table, covered with a carpet-like cloth. Mr. Keeler brought out two slates both sides, of which I sponged with my own hands. Then he wiped them with his handkerchief. Then he then asked me to write some questions addressing the spirit with whom I wished to communicate. I asked him whether I could write my questions in the native tongue of my friend. He replied : 'Yes, you can do so'. Then I wrote in Bengali on a slip of paper, folded it, and put it on the top of those two slates, between which Mr. Keeler had already placed a small bit of a slate pencil about one half of an inch long. He put his handkerchief loosely around the slates. I held two corners of the slates with both hands, and the medium held the other two corners with his hands. This way the slates were raised above the table in the air between our hands. We sat for a few minutes, and chatted a little, for he said that conversation did not interfere with the writing at all. Mr. Keeler then said : 'I do not know whether your friend will come or not, but I shall do my best'. After a few minutes I asked him whether it was necessary to put my name on the paper. He replied : 'Yes'. He then asked me whether I wrote the name of my friend in English or not. I answered in the negative. He replied :

‘Perhaps my spirit guide will not be able to call whom you want, as he cannot read your language.’ Hearing this I wrote the following on another slip of paper in English :

‘Jogen are you here ? Answer my questions written in Bengali.’

and signed my name—SWAMI ABHEDANANDA. Then I folded this slip of paper and placed it on the top of the slates. Holding the slates again between our hands we talked on various subjects. Mr. Keeler asked me whether my departed friend had ever communicated before. I replied : ‘Last evening at Mr. Campbell’s seance I asked my friend some questions but in reply I received a piece of paper on which his name Jogen was written with blue pencil and nothing else. That is all. Then within a few minutes Mr. Keeler put the slates on the table and wrote with a pencil ‘Jogen is here’ on one corner of the top slate. He asked me to read it. I read it, and said that the name was correct. Again he held two corners of the double slate with both hands and asked me to hold the other two corners, as stated above. The slates were nearly six inches above the table suspended in the air between our hands, as we sat on either sides of the table with arms stretched. Then I heard the scratching noise of the moving pencil coming from inside of the slates. Mr. Keeler said : ‘Do you hear the noise of the pencil ?’ I said : ‘Yes.’ It was over in about two seconds. I felt an electric shock in my arms while the pencil was moving. Mr. Keeler said that he also felt a gentle

shock. We opened the slates and found the following words written in legible handwriting :

‘I find no one here who can answer the questions of this gentleman,’

signed G. C. Then I asked Mr. Keeler who this G. C. was and he replied : ‘G. C. is my spirit guide. His full name is George Cristi’. Then Mr. Keeler said : ‘Why, your friend is here, he must write’. He wiped the slates, and fixed them again as before. He held the slip of paper with questions in his own hands for a few seconds, and asked me to do the same. I did so. Then we held the slates again as before. Again I felt a gentle electric shock in my arms after a few minutes, and heard the scratching noise of the pencil, coming from inside of the double slates. The noise stopped in a few seconds, and the results was the slate-writing in four different languages : Sanskrit, Greek, English and Bengali. Seeing the writing Mr. Keeler was very much surprised, for he could not read or write Sanskrit, Greek and Bengali. Here I must mention that at Lily Dale there was not a single person outside myself who could read or write Sanskrit and Bengali. I was also surprised to see that the handwriting in Bengali resembled the handwriting of my friend ‘Jogen’ (Swami Jogananda), when he was in his earthly body.

I thanked Mr. Keeler for this extraordinary phenomenon, which I could not explain, and begged of him to give me those slates, as I wanted to find out how it was done, by showing the slate-writing to

other mediums or spiritualists. Mr. Keeler said that he never had such a slate-writing before. I took the slates and bade him good-bye. Thus ended the seance.

Let me mention here that neither my friend nor myself knew Greek. However, in another seance, I was told by the spirit that my friend brought with him the spirit of a Greek philisopher who wrote the Greek verse. At first I did not believe in the truth of this statement, but when I showed those lines to the Professor of Greek at Columbia University in New York, he said that this verse was a familiar gem of Plato, that every word was correctly written. He then translated the literal meaning of the verse.

In another seance, when I wanted to see Jogen materialized, he replied that he did not like it. But I was surprised to see the spirit of Babu Balaram Basu of 57, Ramkanto Bose's Street, Calcutta, fully materialized in the seance of Mrs. Moss at Lily Dale in the state of New York. He wore his familiar white turban on his head, as he used to wear it while in his mortal body. But now it was illuminated as it were with tiny electric bulbs all around the folds of his headdress. My eyes were dazzled to look at this brilliant figure with flowing beard and majestic appearance. He did not speak but answered my questions by nodding his turbaned head. He put his right hand on my head and silently blessed me. At that time I could see the medium Mrs. Moss (who was very stout) sitting unconscious in dead trance on a rocking chair. After blessing me the whole mate-

rialized figure of Balaram Basu melted away in a mistlike white substance and disappeared.¹

I wondered why he did not speak and on questioning I received the answer that he did not speak because he could not speak before he passed out of his earthly life. This statement corroborated with the fact that before he died Balaram Basu had suffered from double pneumonia and could not speak for over a week.

In another seance I heard Jogen's voice in Bengali when he spoke to me through a tin trumpet. He said to me : 'Do you like this country (America) ?' to which I replied : 'Yes.' Then he said : 'I do not like this place, I am going to India to see our Holy Mother'.

Here I must mention that while on earth Jogen served our Holy Mother, the consort of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrsna, with his whole heart and soul. I had also seen in America portrait-painting painted by the invisible hand of a discarnate spirit done in my presence.

1. We have also heard from the Swami that he saw the Holy Mother Sarada Deva, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Adhutananda (Latu Maharaj), the Poet Girish Candra Ghose and Sister Nivedita in materialized bodies just after the moments of their passing away. In every case, immediately after those psychic visions were over, the Swami received cablegrams from India bearing the sad news of their passing away.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WHAT IS THERE BEYOND THE GRAVE

The Psalms—Jews did not believe in the existence of a soul—The Zoroastrians on soul—Pharisees and Sadducees—Resurrection of the body—Heaven and hell—Last Day of Judgement and Ahura-Mazda—Belief in Messiah—Egyptian heaven—The writings of the Babylonians and Chaldeans—The Greek and Roman histories—The Scandinavian belief in Valhalla—Different beliefs in heavens—Heavens are projections of our own ideas—The popular belief in the existence of discarnate souls—Death is not an enemy of life—The belief of orthodox Christianity—The conditions of a dying man—Latent powers become stronger at the time of death—Souls contract their powers—Our central life—*Sukma-sharira*—Weight of the psychic body—Attraction of the spirit for his material body—The soul enters the *borderland* after bodily death—Borderland, the state of vibration—The thoughts and ideas of the spirits—Earthbound souls—There is a general law for everybody—Periodicity of the soulslumber—The material bodies are the results of our thoughts and deeds—The Hindus believe in the existence of the soul from time immemorial—The fraudulent spirits—Spirits borrow thoughts from the subconscious mind of anybody—The funeral ceremonies of the Hindus are different from those of the Christians—We can help spirits more than they can help us—Good thoughts or prayers help the spirits—Present works, the seed of the future—The conditions of the souls in their slumbers—Astral shells—Those are the planes which we call heavens—Law of cause and sequence—The realm of thought—How do the spirits see, touch, hear in the world beyond grave—Sleep after death is like the sleep before birth—The second sleep—The souls seek suitable conditions and environments before their birth—The occupations may be according to the beliefs—There is none to mould our future—Desires are the causes of our sufferings—The wise ones need not be afraid of death.

What is there beyond the grave is the question that often rises in our minds, and we like to know what will happen to us after we pass out of the body at the time of death. When we read the different scriptures of the world, we find that the same question was discussed, and various answers were received, either through their intellect, through their conception of the world, or through revelations. Among the

answers, which have been handed down to us from time immemoria, we find that in the Old Testament, when this question arose in the mind of Job, he answered in a negative form. He longed for death, thinking that it would end his mental agony. In Pslams we read :

'Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead ? Shall the dead arise and praise thee ?¹

Again we read :

'In death there is no remembrance of thee : in the grave who shall give thee thanks ?²

'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to this carth ; in that very day his thoughts perish.³

'The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.⁴

Solomon spoke boldly as :

'All things come alike to all : there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean ; * * * as is the good, so is the sinner.⁵

'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine a with a merry heart ; * * * Live joyfully with the wife P P P for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, wihther thou goest.⁶

'The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward ; for the memory of them in is forgotten.⁷

Furthermore we read :

'For that which befalleth the sons of men befalieth beasts ; even one thing befalleth them : as the one dieth, so dieth

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1. Psalm 88, Verse 10.
 2. Psalm 6, Verse 5.
 3. Psalm 146, Verse 4.
 4. Psalm 115, Verse 17.
 5. Ecclesiastes, Ch. 9, Verse 2.
 6. Do- Verses 7, 9, 10.
 7. Do- Verse 5.

the other, ; yea, they have all one breath ; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.

'All go unto place ; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.'

'Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth.'⁸

There are many such passages that create a great deal of confusion in our minds. Which of these answers is true: whether after entering into the grave we continue to live, or is it true that we perish in the grave ?

It is believed that Jesus Christ brought eternal life into light. Of course, he did bring eternal life into light among the Jewish tribes, who did not believe in the life after death, or, in the truth, that life continues even after we enter into the grave. The Jews of that time, that is, from the ancient times down to the time of the Babylonian Captivity, did not believe in the existence of a soul which could live separately from the body. They had an idea that the breath of life came from Jehovah, and at the time of death the same breath of life went back to Jehovah. What happens to the beasts, happens also to the saints and sinners alike. Those passages which I have quoted, referred to that state of belief, that state of mind which existed at that time. But during the Babylonian Captivity, which lasted from 586 to 536 B. C., the Jews came in touch with a highly civilized nation, the Zoroastrians or the Parsees from Persia, who believed in the resurrection after death. They believed in a heaven and a hell, in angels and arch-angels, and in the last Day of Judgment. All these

8. Ecclesiastes, Ch. III, *Verses* 19-21 :

ideas were unknown to the Jews of ancient times. But some of the Jews accepted that belief, and others denied it. Those among the Jews who accepted that belief in resurrection, in angels, in archangels, were known as Pharisees. The very word *Pharisee* is a Hebraic form of the word *Parsee*. The Pharisees who lived in Persia, were the followers of Zoroastrianism. But the others were orthodox Jews, who did not accept these new ideas. They considered those ideas as heretical, and they were known as Sadducees. So the Sadducees were the orthodox Jews who did not believe in resurrection. Even in the New Testament, we find mention of a Sadducee who came and questioned whether there was such a thing as resurrection. But the idea of resurrection that we find among the ancient Zoroastrians, is different from the conception of the resurrection of the body, that has been accepted by the Christians. The resurrection of the physical body was not meant by the resurrection, when the ancient Zoroastrians believed in that conception.

They believed in the resurrection of the spiritual body, which continues to live after the gross physical body is destroyed. After the third day, according to them, the body is laid in the grave, and on the morning of the fourth day, all souls rise, and this is the spiritual rise of the souls. And those who are righteous, go into the Paradise, the Paradise of good thought, good word and good deed. Those who are not righteous, also rise, and they go to hell of evil thought, evil word and evil deed. There they remain in darkness, until the time of the last Day of Judgment, when

Ahura Mazda, the Creator of good, would conquer Ahriman, the Creator of evil. Ahriman was at first friendly to Ahura Mazda, but afterwards he rebelled against Ahura Mazda, and came down to this earth to take revenge, because he was expelled from the heavens. And this Ahriman, by the way, became Satan in Christianity. The conception of Satan is what we find in the Zoroastrian scriptures, known as the Zend Avesta. So this Ahriman is the Lord of this world, just as Satan is described as the prince of this world in the fourth Gospel. So he is trying to destroy the good work of the Creator Ahura Mazda, and he has brought sin and death into this world. He is constantly fighting against the works of Ahura Mazda, the Creator of good, and his power will eventually be overcome and conquered by the Creator of good, and then the Lord will create a new world free from the influence or the power of Ahriman. That is the time when the last Day of Judgment will come. They also believed in a Messiah. That Messiah will appear in the heavens, in the clouds. His name is Saoshyant, and he will help those righteous souls to enter into Paradise, and enjoy eternal celestial pleasures. But those who are in the darkness of ignorance, will also be forgiven for their sins, and will be allowed to enter into the celestial regions. That was the original belief among the Zoroastrians.

Now comparing the Christian belief with that of the Zoroastrians, we find how similar the Christian belief is to this old Zoroastrian belief of resurrection, the last Day of Judgment and going into heaven.

All these conceptions existed in Persia long before the time of Christ, and it was noticed and accepted by the Pharisees during that period of Captivity, which lasted, from 586 to 536 B.C. So their conception of resurrection was not absolutely dependent upon the resurrection of the body of Christ. These are all historical facts.

How can we admit that Christ brought the conception of eternal life into light in its literal sense, when we know that conception of eternal life existed not only among the Zoroastrians, but also among the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, the Chinese, the Hindus, and all other ancient nations, like the Romans, the Greeks, the Scandinavians. They all had a belief in eternal life. As early as 12000 B.C. we find the records among the Egyptians. The Egyptian writers during the period from 12000 to 8000 B.C. recorded that there was a belief in the resurrection of the gross physical body among the ancient Egyptians, and they also believed that the soul of the righteous would go into celestial regions, and enjoy all the pleasures that are to be found in those regions. They would have physical forms, almost like the physical form we have on earth, and that crude idea of the resurrection of the gross physical body was afterwards given up, when they came to understand the subtle powers and subtle forces of nature, and when they realized that each human body has its double, which is made up of finer elements of matter, etherial. When their belief became strong in that double, which had exactly the same form as the gross physical body had, they gave up the

idea of the resurrection of the gross physical body. The writers among old Egyptians who lived in the 5th dynasty, that is, about 3400 years before Christ, emphatically declared 'the heaven hath thy soul and the earth hath thy body'. The soul belongs to the heaven, and the body belongs to the earth. Since that day there arose the idea of preserving the body, because they had another belief that this double, which is similar in shape and form with the gross physical body, continues to remain intact so long as the gross physical body is preserved intact, and that idea gave rise to the thought of mummifying the physical body. That was at the foundation of that practice, and the belief that if any arm or any limb of the physical body was mutilated, then that particular part or that particular limb of the double would also be mutilated. For that reason they tried to keep the whole body intact by that peculiar process of mummifying.

They had also this belief that the souls of the righteous would go into heaven, and would live with the gods and eat and drink with the gods. They would have their physical body, although consisting of finer particles of matter like the ethereal body, still those bodies were physical, and they needed food and drink. For that reason, some of the friends and relatives of the departed ones used to keep food and drink in the grave. That practice was continued for sometime. Some of them went so far as to put amulets and charms in the graves. Because they had the belief that the departed friends and relatives needed those charms to counteract the evil influence.

It was also written that these souls of the righteous ones would go into heavens, and walk in the fields of peace, wearing the celestial apparel of white linen and white sandals. There are canals, where they bathe in pleasure. The deepest of pleasures that we have on this earth also exist in the Egyptian heaven.

Then when we read the writings of the Babylonians and Chaldeans, we find that the Chaldeans also had a belief in the resurrection of the corpse, and for that reason, they embalmed the body, and buried it in the grave underground in order to preserve them. That custom has been handed down to the Christians who bury the dead following the same custom of the ancient Chaldeans and Babylonians. That shows that among the Chaldeans and Babylonians there was a belief in eternal life. And the ideas that we have today, we did not get from the time of Christ, but they existed centuries before the advent of the illustrious Son of Man.

If we read the Greek and Roman histories, there we find that the Greeks had a belief in the Elysian Fields that the souls of the righteous would go into the Elysian Fields and there take up the occupations of their life on earth. They would meet their friends ; the husband would meet the wife ; the parents would meet their children ; and they would continue to live there and enjoy all the blessings of life.

The Scandinavians had a belief in Valhalla. They were warriors, and fighters, and they carried on their fight in the heavens in the presence of Odin. There the brave soldiers who had fallen in the battle-field, would

go and fight with their enemies, and they would get hurt and wounded, but by the miraculous powers of Odin their wounds would be healed, and they would take their arms again and fight. After fighting in the fields, they would hunt a wild boar and kill it and bring it and roast it and have a great banquet and feast. And this process will continue every day throughout eternity. Now remember that eternity does not mean a thousand years, ten thousand years, a million years, or trillions of years, but it means time without end.

But there are other believers like the American Indians. They have the happy hunting grounds in the heavens. Then we find among the Mohammedans that there is another conception of heaven. They say that the souls of the righteous, who follow the commandments of Allah, would go to their Mohammedan heaven, where there is plenty of shade, rivers of pure water running, rivers of milk, wine, and honey, all running in the heavens. And there are maidens (*houris*) who pour wine into the goblets of the pious ones, and the pious ones drink and enjoy the company of those maidens. They have trees, under which they rest and enjoy the taste of the delicious fruits which those trees bear. You know that the Arabs lived in a desert, where there was a great need of water and shade. The Arab people wanted water; and that was their idea of heaven, with plenty of shade, delicious fruits, and all the enjoyments that they could imagine on this earth they projected and made a heaven that contained all such delightful things.

It is a kind of heaven which is damp and wet and full of water. But I come from a country where the annual rainfall is five hundred forty inches. I would not care to go to a wet heaven.⁹

So, from these descriptions what do we learn? We learn that each nation and each tribe project their highest ideals of heaven, and create one like a dreamland, and the conception of heaven is the place, where we can enjoy all the pleasures without having any break or sorrow or separation. That is, we continue to enjoy these pleasures throughout eternity. Such is their belief. Some people believe that their occupation in heaven will be singing and playing upon the harp, eternal music, constantly singing, and listening to the music. There is a verse in a hymn which was sung at one time in the orthodox churches describing the pleasures in heaven :

‘Where congregations ne’er break up, and Sabbaths never end.’

Of course, such a heaven will exist for those who believe in such an ideal. There would be a place or a realm, where those souls who believe and have the same faith in the Lord, will congregate, and will sing the praise of their Saviour ; and the Saviour might be Jesus the Christ, or Buddha, or a Prophet, or some other Saviour, as among the Hindus. They will go and gather around their ideal, just as satellites whirl around a planet. So these faithful believers will be held together by their faith, to the centre of their ideal, which is the Saviour, and he may be Christ or

9. Cf. Swami Abhedananda : *Path of Realization*, pp. 149-160.

Buddha or any other incarnation of Divinity. So that would be the heaven and the ideal place where the great righteous saints will go.

But these beliefs that have been handed down to us, do not convince us, and do not make us feel sure that after the grave we are going into heaven or to eternal perdition. We want to know more about it. We want some proofs. Now the spiritual seance will tell you that the souls, after passing through the grave, enter into various conditions, and become angels. They know everything. They can help humanity, their friends and relatives. But that is a question, whether they can help us in any way. Many people believe that they can ; others deny it. But they do not deny the existence of the souls after death. They believe in the existence of the discarnate souls, but whether they can help us in any way through communications, that is another point, and that point should be understood. Who are the departed ones who communicate with us ? And who can help us ? The popular belief is that no matter how a man lived his life on this earth, but as soon as he passes through the gates of the grave, he will enter into a realm of activity, and will become conscious of everything, will know all the laws and become perfect ; and they have the power to help mankind, by giving messages in various other ways. But those who believe in this kind of ideal, do not understand that our life in the future or after death, will be the continuation of this life. Death is not an enemy of this life, as it has been popularly understood in orthodox Christianity.

Orthodox Christianity has made death a terrible enemy of life, that as soon as one has entered into the realm of death, his life is stereotyped, and he is doomed either to enjoy all the pleasures or to go to eternal perdition and suffer for ever. Death is not such an enemy of life. It is only a state.

Now, we can easily understand that it is a stage or passage, through which we can go somewhere else, if we study the condition of a dying man. What happens to a man who is dying? We find that his body and senses are becoming weak. The sensations are getting dim. The physical body does not move. But his psychical powers are becoming keener and stronger. Some of them would develop perhaps the power of clairvoyance and clairaudience. They would see things at a distance. They would hear sounds from a distance. Their keen psychic senses would be developed, and all the powers that are latent now in our subconscious plane, will rise in the conscious plane. Memory will become then stronger. There have been cases, where the dying persons went to a distance in the form of an apparition and gave a message, asking the relative to take care of their orphan children or continue to do certain things which they have left unfulfilled and unfinished. Such cases have been recorded. In Europe, only a few years ago these statistics were kept, giving all the particulars, the time, the hour, and with proper verifications. You will also find in the records and the annals of the Psychical Research Society that have kept such records. What do these records prove? The records prove that there is a power in us which is

latent at present perhaps, but at the time of death that power becomes stronger. It is also said that the dying persons can communicate with their friends and relatives who have passed out long before their death and who are living in the other world. They can not only communicate with them, but also they can communicate with those who are on this earth. Then after their death they pass through a state ; that is, the souls contract their powers that are scattered in the waking state, just as we do when we go to sleep. Our central-life, the source of intelligence, which is centralized in one point, withdraws all the powers that are scattered all over the body, the sense powers, and all these powers are concentrated in that centre, which is like a nucleus. This nucleus holds those powers at the time of sleep, and at the time of death the same thing happens.¹ It is only a deeper sleep than our ordinary sleep. That is, the soul contracts and becomes concentrated into that central nucleus, where the sense powers, the thought powers, the reasoning faculties, memory and all other powers are held together by that life-force which is an inherent property of the individual soul. By that individual soul I mean here the thinker, that

1. This nucleus is called the *prana* or the *mukhya-prana* (the life-force). 'As the *prana* leaves the body it takes with it all the sense-powers, which are dependent upon it. The dying man carries with him the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, seizing, moving, speaking, excreting, generating and the power of thinking as well as self-consciousness. All the vital forces and subconscious activities of the organs are also withdrawn when *Prana* leaves the body.'—Swami Abhedananda : *Self-Knowledge*, p. 63. Cf *Kausitaki Upanishad* (III. 4).

which thinks, that which feels, that which perceives, and that which knows. Then that individual soul withdraws his powers just as you have noticed perhaps in the case of a turtle. Now when a turtle is frightened, what does it do ? It withdraws its limbs within the shell. That very illustration had been given in the *Bhagaved Gita* (2-58) :

‘The soul withdraws its limbs inside its shell, just as a turtle when frightened would withdraw its limbs within its shell’.

You can imagine that the process takes place just before the time of death and then that entity or that thinker has a subtle form, which is called in Sanskrit the ‘*suksma-sharira*’. It may be called the spiritual body or the astral body ; and that spiritual body goes out of the physical body at the time of death like a mist. It is an imperceptible mist. There are some psychists who have the power to see that mist, and by sensitive photographic plates they have taken the photographs of that mist, although it is imperceptible to human eyes. Scientific experiments have also proved that the dead, if placed upon a very sensitive scale and weighed just before death and immediately after death, a decisive difference in the weight will be found. The body will lose about one-half or three quarters of an ounce. That three-quarters of an ounce is the weight of that mist that goes out of the body, and it has been photographed. There have been cases which have been recorded.

I remember the case of a young girl who was standing beside her dying brother, and she said :

‘Mother, mother, look at the mist around the body.’ But the mother could not see the mist around the body’.

This mist is only the inner garment of the soul. It is not the soul. Soul is the centre or nucleus, and mist is the finer garment. It is the subtle body and that subtle body remains after death. Where does it go ? It hovers around the body for a long time. If the body is preserved in the grave, the attraction of the physical body which it loved so dearly and which he took care of for so many years with so much love, attracts the soul, or rather the soul clings to that body. For that reason the Hindu belief is that it is better to destroy the body. The destruction of the gross body releases the soul. But, if it is put into the grave, the soul has the desire to come and look at the body, and even after it has passed out for a long time, it has that desire and curiosity to see what is happening in the grave ; and that is a very undesirable state. It makes the soul unhappy. It is agony to see that beautiful body decaying and disintegrating. It is very undesirable that the souls should suffer even in the other world. For that reason, cremation has been considered as the best way of disposing of the body. The sooner it is destroyed, the quicker the soul forgets its existence, which is better for the soul, to forget the existence of the dead body which is left behind.

Then what happens to soul ? The soul, remaining clothed with the finer garment of the subtle body, enters the borderland, where this earth ends and

the new spiritworld begins. That is called the *borderland*. It is not a land ; and there is no line of demarcation in the external space like the horizon. It is the different state of vibration. It is another dimension. Now, we are living in the third dimension, where we have the knowledge of the length, breadth and height. But we do not know the deth. That is the fourth dimension, and in that fourth dimension these things do not exist, and yet it occupies the same space. You imagine that the earth is a hollow form, just as an outline ; it has no solid substance in it. There the souls exist, and they come out from that plane of that dimension to our dimension, and we can see and feel them. It is just like going down to the bottom of the ocean. Our soul's coming on the earth is like going down to the bottom of the ocean.

When you go there, what will you have to do ? You will have to put on a diver's suit, which weighs tons. If you do not put it on, you cannot go down. If you have a finer body, you cannot come and remain on this plane. You will go into a different plane, where the vibration will harmonize with your physical form. For that reason we say that the borderland is not like a place or a corridor leading from this room to the other room behind the wall. It is a different kind of vibration. The same vibration may be continued, but we have not the power to perceive that vibration. If we have the finer senses, we shall be able to see them and perceive their existence. For instance, there may be music, a concert, and there are different notes which repre-

sent different vibrations of sound, or vibration of air, in a different scale with different keys. Now all might be combined into a beautiful harmony, but if you want to hear distinctly each sound which is on a different key, you must be conscious of it. There are different vibrations. Imagine that in this space there are wireless messages that are going on, but one does not interfere with the other, because each one has a different vibration. So each individual soul which passes out of the body, takes his own vibration with him. His thoughts and ideas are nothing but vibrations, and he is the centre radiating all these vibrations constantly. He takes them with him, and, therefore, he does not interfere with any other centre of vibration. He carries them in his own realm, and there he remains for some time, until he may go into a state of slumber, which is a sleep state, because the exhaustion after doing all his physical labour, while living on this earth, is so great that the soul likes to rest and remains in that restful sleep. Nothing can disturb the soul, when it enters into that sleep. Even God cannot disturb the sleeping soul. But those who have passed away in anxiety, sorrow, and suffering, will have a disturbed sleep. They cannot go into a perfect rest. But, on account of attachment, they dream that their earthly friends and relatives weep and wail and grieve. They are dragged down. They walk, as it were, in sleep, like a somnambulist, a half sleeping and drowsy state. That is why you find many of their manifestations in seances are dreamy, half sleeping, and idiotic. They are dragged down by the invocations of their friends,

and they come and try in their dream state to help them, but they do not know what they are doing. There are certain souls who have the consciousness, know that they are dead. They are in a state of confusion. It requires some time for them to realize that they are dead. They remain some time earthbound. If they have strong attachment for their friends and relatives, whom they loved so much on earth, they hover around them ; but it causes them great sorrow and suffering when their friends, and relatives do not recognize their presence, and do not treat them properly. So, each soul will make his own environment and his own condition, according to his thoughts and deeds.

So we understand that there is not a general law for everybody. Just as two individuals are not equally alike, so two souls will not be in the same state of vibration after death. After entering into that borderland, the souls will go into that slumber and remain there indefinitely. That is, some souls will remain longer in that sleep, and others will remain shorter. Those that are strongly attached to immoral and animal desires will not have a long sleep, because they will wake up by their desires, which will sprout in that state. And some will remain earthbound, and they will remain in that state and gratify their earthly desires, and they will perhaps pick out some mediums, through whom they can gratify their desires of drinking and immorality, and this is why you find a great many mediums have turned out to be drunken and immoral. It is not the fault of the mediums. It is the fault of the spirit who is trying

to gratify his immoral tendencies and desires through the sense organs of the medium. And, for that reason, it is very dangerous to allow these spirits to come and take possession of our physical forms and organs. There is one law about it, and that law should be understood very clearly. We have taken this body as the result of our thought and deed which we had in the past, and we have manufactured this body to rise higher to gain more experience for ourselves, not for anybody else. Suppose we allow other spirits to come and manifest through us, what do we gain by it? We have sacrificed our opportunity. That is our loss. We may say that we are helping humanity, but we are not helping humanity. We have been put into a hypnotic sleep and we are unconscious.

Our organs have been used by somebody else, or by some other force. This other force is gaining experience through us, and we are depriving us of our own opportunity for the good of that spirit who is manifesting through us. That consideration has been overlooked by a great many of those who are interested in spirit manifestations and in communications with the departed ones. The Hindus are the only people today, who from time immemorial have studied the spiritual side, and have recorded the result, and have left their knowledge, which has been handed down to us through generations. There is no other nation in the world, which has so perfect a knowledge in these lines, as we have in India. For that reason, you will notice that we do not allow our friends to go into that trance or mediumistic

condition, because there is a great danger in it, and if you once open your psychic door, you cannot close it very easily. There are some spirits who are fraudulent, and who can impersonate as somebody else and fool the people. Such cases have been recorded. Some one will appear as a great soul, but, in reality, it is not. How are you going to distinguish them? Of course, not by their apparent wise counsels, which they can borrow from the subconscious mind of anybody. That discrimination should be made, and we must realize the difference between the higher and the lower spirits, and also that whenever we allow them to come to us for any message, we are dragging them to the earthplane. It is not helpful to them. For that reason, the Hindu people believe that it is better in every way to leave these spirits alone, and if they have gone into the slumber, let them rest there. Send them good thoughts.

The funeral ceremonies among the Hindus are different from those of the Christians. The difference lies in these that services for the departed ones are performed; good acts and charitable works are done in the name of the departed ones, with the thought that the result of these works will go to them. That will release them from their earth-bound condition. We can help the spirits more than they can help us, because they are nearer to our thought realm.¹ If we send them a good thought, we are helping them. If we do any good act in their name and if we concentrate our mind with the

11. *Vide Notes.*

thought that the result of this good work will go to them to help them in their onward progress, as we are doing good to them. They can give us sometimes certain messages. Some of them and not all, who are advanced and have understood the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, and who are conscious of the causes, can trace the results.

For instance, you have a certain thought in your mind, and that is the seed of a future result, which is bound to come to you. If anyone can read that thought that you have in a seed form just now, he can tell what will happen in your future. The psychometrists can do that, rolling in that idea and producing an effect like the blossoming of a flower. It is all there in the mind. It is a vibratory state of the mind. That vibratory state can be realized by those who are advanced in the psychic planes and develop psychic powers. So we cannot make one rule for everybody. Some will sleep in that slumber for a long time, and those souls who are spiritually advanced and highly developed, will throw off these subtle forms, which are like the sheaths of the soul. These are the limitations. These are the animal desires and tendencies, jealousy and love for material things. All those are the limitations of the soul. The soul, after sleeping for some time, when it realizes that it is under limitations, discards them. These discarded shells are sometimes called astral shells, and these astral shells float around. There is no soul in them. They are like thought forms, and these thought forms might

be reanimated by the thought of the medium or of any individual. So you may see some ghosts or elementals. They are all like them. There are other elementals of lower animal spirits ; that is, they have not yet become human beings. They are rising in the process of evolution. These might come, and might be perceived after waking from the soul-slumber, and then these souls enter into the astral plane. They might have a very peaceful rest, and then they go into those planes, where they can realize the fulfilment of their desires. Those are the planes which we call heavens, where we have fulfilment of our desires, thoughts and deeds. If we have performed good deeds, those impressions are left there, and those impressions will gradually sprout and produce the result by the law of cause and sequence. Those results are reaped by the individuals in those different realms which are called heavens, and these are the ideals of the different nations. So you see, those who have a desire to enjoy pleasures like the pleasures in a particular heaven, where there is plenty to eat and drink and shade and a cool place, will dream of such a state. Their ideals will be materialized, as it were. The realm of thought form is like the realm, where their thought is realized as truth, just as in a dream. When you dream a dream, you do not know that it is a dream, but you know that it is real, and it is a thought form that you are perceiving. You may look at it, you may touch it, you may hear the sound, but they are all in the realm of thoughts. So there are no real scenes or trees or different roads and

canals except in thought forms. They are like a dreamland, and there the soul remains and enjoys those pleasures, because it wanted them. It is the plane for the fulfilment of thoughts and desires. After a while, when those desires are fulfilled, the souls get tired of that condition. Then the soul wants change, and it gets out of those conditions. It wants something different. There are many souls in the other realm who are tired or exhausted. They want a more tangible and sensible or perceptible realization of their ideals and thoughts. So they like to go to different planes or realms. Some of them would like to come down on this earth to enjoy more pleasures, and develop more powers, and so they are born and reincarnated. Some of them have the power to choose their parents. Some will go to sleep again.

The sleep after death is like the sleep before the birth. Then they have a second sleep before they come to this plane they go into that sleep, and gravitate towards the proper environment. If I have a strong desire to be the best artist, and if I do not succeed or pass away before I fulfil my desire, that desire will remain in me even in that soul-slumber. It will sprout again. Perhaps I will be drawn into the heaven of the artists, where I would have communication and communion with the other artists who are living there, and exchange our thoughts perhaps. Then I will try to manifest that desire again once more on this plane, and I will gravitate under the proper conditions and environments, where I will have the physical body which will be the

instrument, through which I would realize my ideal. That is the process that takes place.

So there is no eternal heaven or eternal place of punishment. If there be any punishment at all, it is like the punishment as we have on the earth plane. That punishment you will get. When we desire a thing and cannot get it, that is hell. That state we may go through on account of strong attachment. A miser, who has formed the habit of handling dollars and cents, enjoys it, and he loves it. Now, if he goes into that plane or astral plane, he will carry that desire with him. But he will have no dollars and cents to handle, and he will be hankering after that, and that will be his punishment. So it is very difficult for us to know exactly what would be the hell or that state of punishment for any individual who has committed something wrong. It is all that we draw towards ourselves by our thoughts and deeds. These dreams might be real for the time being and true, as all dreams are so long as we are dreaming ; but, in reality, when compared with eternal time, or when compared with the highest standard, they last only for a short period. No heaven is eternal ; no hell is eternal. For that reason it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (8.16) :

आन्नह्ममुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

‘O Arjuna, none of these heavens from the highest heaven of the Creator downward is permanent. The inhabitants thereof are sure to return from them sooner or later’.

They are ephemeral. They do not last throughout eternity in one state. So this is a progress that the

soul makes after entering into the grave. Either he will go to heaven, or suffer according to the law of justice. The law of justice is very strict. There is no such thing as forgiveness, but, in reality, it is the justice that balances compensation. The well-balanced state of the law of cause and effect is inexorable. 'Whatsoever thou sowest thou shalt reap'. And that is as strong and as real as you are sitting here now. You may deny it, but you cannot get out of it. We may deny through ignorance the force of gravity, but at every step we could not move, and could not even exist on the surface of the earth, if it were not for the force of gravity. A child does not know whether there is such a thing as gravity, and his ignorance does not affect the law in any way. Our childish denial does not make a thing non-existent ; it simply shows that we do not know better. So this law of cause and sequence which is called the *law of karma*, does not wait for widow's tears or orphan's cries. What we have sown, we must reap either on this plane or in some other realm. So after death we may enjoy the pleasures of our thoughts and deeds in heavenly regions.

The occupations may be according to the belief that we will continue to do certain things. It is not true however that all the types of our earthly occupations will be reproduced there. That is not possible. If it were so, then life would not be worth-living. Suppose a street cleaner has to clean the streets of heaven throughout eternity, a cook or a seamstress will have to continue to do the same work throughout eternity ; what kind of heaven would that be ?

It would be the opposite place, according to our conception. But there are works, unconscious works, activities of the physical body on the unconscious plane, helping others, trying to bring the souls who are suffering and in darkness, to give a certain light, certain knowledge ; but even that cannot be done without violating a law, because no one can give us anything unless we deserve it. Those souls which deserve any help will receive help. For that reason the widely known common maxim : 'Heaven helps those that help themselves', is absolutely true. Because those who help themselves, have made themselves ready for receiving help from the universe ; and if we have not made ourselves ready to receive help from the universe, the universe does not help us. It depends entirely upon our own worth and attitude. And, for that reason, the great teachers have always told us to be prepared to receive the help, and live on this earth a life that will bring to us peace and happiness, and that will never make us repent even for a second, because we must feel the responsibility that we have upon our shoulders. By coming on this earth and living this life, we have taken the whole burden of our responsibility of our future as well as of whatever we are going to do on this earth, because our character and future are made by ourselves. There is no other soul that will mould our future for us, but we are little creators, and as creators on a diminutive scale we are making our future, creating our destiny and building up our character by our thoughts and deeds. And, therefore, we must do it consciously and knowingly, and by understanding the

laws that govern our lives, not only on the physical but also on the mental, moral, intellectual, and spiritual planes.

If we understand those laws, then we are opening up vistas of our future progress. We have nothing to be sorry for, when we have nothing to repent. Our earthly life would be a series or a continuous chain of pleasure and happiness, if we knew the real conditions and real truths that underlie our beings. But these truths are hidden from us, because we have not become ready to know them. We are just playing on the surface, but the time is bound to come for each individual soul, when there will be an awakening of a desire to know the real truth. No soul will be lost. Each soul will attain eventually to the highest knowledge or realization, and enter into that state, where there is no birth, no death, and no change of any kind but eternal being, eternal bliss, and eternal knowledge. So we must not be afraid of death. Death is nothing but a change. We may throw off this body, because we may put on another body, if we have such a desire. We also find in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2.13) :

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं ज्वरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्षीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

'As in our physical body, we survive the death of the baby body, and of the young body, so we live after throwing off the form of the subtle body, as we throw off the old garments and put on new ones.'

So at the time of death, we throw off the physical body, which has served its purpose, and put on a new

one, a finer one, more glorious and more lasting. Therefore the wise ones will never be afraid of death, but always will remember that there is an eternal life for everybody, and no soul will be lost. Those who have attained to the highest spiritual realization, will eventually come face to face with the Infinite, and attain that peace and happiness which have been attained by Sri Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna, and by all the other Saviours of the world.

APPENDICES

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS : DISCUSSIONS THAT WE WERE PRIVILEGED TO HAVE WITH THE SWAMI :

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. In the realm after death, will the soul continue to evolve into a state of perfection, or is it necessary to gravitate back to the earth and reincarnate ?

Ans. It depends upon the desire of the soul.

Q. If the soul can evolve without coming back, would it not be better not to come back.

Ans. They cannot get the same experience in the other realm, as they would get here in the physical form.

Q. Are there enough bodies for all souls that wish to gravitate back and become reincarnated ?

Ans. Well, you have cherished an idea that the bodies are waiting for the souls. That is not correct. The souls manufacture the bodies. The idea that you have expressed is the old belief in transmigration ; that the bodies are made ready to receive the migrating souls, but that does not mean reincarnation. I have explained that in my lecture on *Transmigration*. The soul manufactures the body, by obeying the physical laws of evolution.

Q. When the angel was cast out of heaven, did he incarnate ?

Ans. Well, that is a mythological belief. By the angel from heaven, you mean him who became Satan ? That is a mythological belief that the angel disobeyed the personal Creator. Then He expelled him, and so he fell on this earth. That is a crude kind of explanation, which was given by the primitive minds. There was no actual truth about it. They tried to explain good and evil in nature by that mythology. It was not an actual fact.

Q. You say the dead do not know they are dead ?

Ans. They do not know. It takes a long time for them to realize that they have passed out.

Q. What assurance have we that we are alive ?

Ans. There is no proof. We may call ourselves 'dead.

Q. How are you going to stop the spirits that are drunk from making the mediums drunk ?

Ans. The spirit who has been a drunkard on this earth, has carried that desire with him, and he wants to drink. But he cannot find drink there, and he wants to hover around the brothels. So he takes possession of a medium or some friend or relative, and drives him to drink, so that he enjoys the flavour of it.

Q. How is the obsessed man going to stop it ?

Ans. Well, you would have to dehypnotize him. The medium should be exercised, that is, the obsession could be cured by a higher spirit of higher development. If you know somebody who has a familiar spirit of higher nature, that higher spirit will drive him out by command or by will-power, but the patient might not have that will-power, he requires freedom from another soul to be cured.

Q. Can a soul remain in one particular physical body indefinitely ?

Ans. Yes, it can, if it has understood the laws and lived the life right.

Q. Why did the ancients take out heart and place there a scarb ?

Ans. That was their belief. The scarb was the symbol of creation.

Q. You stated that if the body lay in the grave, the soul would suffer, when it returned and saw that body. Would not the soul suffer more if the body were burnt ?

Ans. It might for a while, if they are conscious that their body is destroyed. It might shock them for a little, but after it is destroyed they would forget. It would be the easiest way to make them forget, because they cannot come and look at it. But if the body is preserved, then that attraction of the body will

attract the soul down, and it might occur many times. So there is an advantage in cremation.

Q. What is the shortest time in years that a spirit soul would remain in dream or unconscious state ?

Ans. Our time does not affect them. Our five thousand years might be five seconds to them.

Q. But how long would it be ? Ten years ?

Ans. Well, that I have already told you.

Q. The Hindus have a way that when somebody dies they put a jar of water and a towel, and they believe that the soul comes for them eight times. Where did that originate ?

Ans. I never saw anything like that. There might be some superstitious belief, but we never saw anything like that that the souls need food, that the souls of the departed ones require nourishment. Some people offer food once a year and our one year may be one day to them ; so once a year they offer food in their name, but the poor people get the benefit.

Q. Do we know our friends there ?

Ans. Yes, we do.

Q. What is the difference between reincarnation and transmigration ?

Ans. Our religion teaches reincarnation, which is a little different from transmigration. Reincarnation is more scientific. It does not teach that we come back from the human plane to the animal bodies indiscriminately simply to gratify our whims.

Q. Do I understand that the soul divides itself into two parts ?

Ans. No, it is what we call the subtle body. It is the body which the soul has manufactured already. It is there now in you and in me. It is not divided, only it takes shelter in the finer spiritual form, and it remains with it while it goes into that slumber and in that astral shell.

Q. What is this mist you were talking about ?

Ans. That mist is only the finer elements like electrons, going out of the body.

Q. Has it anything to do with the soul after death ?

Ans. The soul is the centre which contains life, mind, intelligence, and the mist is not that. Mist is only particles of matter, amassed together like a cloud, or a vapour.

Q. Is that the ego ?

Ans. The ego is in the centre. It is not manifested but it is in a causal state like a nucleus, like an atom.

Q. What becomes of the ego ?

Ans. It is there, only it is then potential, unmanifested.

Q. Is the soul given a power over the physical body ?

Ans. Yes, the healing power is in the soul.

APPENDIX A

A SUMMARY OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA'S SPEECH AT AN ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY OF CALCUTTA.

In 1925, the anniversary meeting of the Psychical Research Society of Calcutta was held in the Arya Samaj Hall, located at the Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. His Highness Maharaja the late Kameshwar Singh Bahadur of Darbhanga presided over the meeting. It was a distinguished gathering. Many prominent persons like Maharaja Sir Pradyot Kumar Tagore, Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nundy of Cossimbazar, Pandit Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, Editor of the Servant (now defunct), and a number of veteran physicians, physicists, and scholars of the great City of Calcutta were present on that occasion. SWAMI ABHEDANANDA was also invited to deliver there a speech on Spiritualism. Long before the hour announced for the meeting the spacious hall was packed to suffocation.

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA, in his flowing ochre-coloured garments, entered the hall a few minutes before the meeting. His noble figure, his bright countenance beaming with inward spiritual light, his serenity made a deep impression upon the minds of the audience. It was a sight not to be easily forgotten.

At the outset of the meeting the Late Babu Pijush Kanti Ghosh of the Amrita Bazar Patrika and one of the chief organizers of the meeting, moved a resolution that SWAMI ABHEDANANDA might be requested to become the President of the Psychical Research Society of Calcutta, during the coming year. The resolution was unanimously carried. After the delivery of the Presidential Address, the President respectfully requested SWAMI ABHEDANANDA to deliver his speech.

The Swami in his speech first gave a brief account of the origin, growth and development of the spiritualistic movement in America, and its gradual spread in other countries of the world. He said that during his long stay in America he came in contact with this movement and some of its leaders well-known in that Continent. Then he very charmingly described his novel experiences as an eye-witness of some famous spiritualistic seances. There he had the opportunity to receive messages from the spirits of many distinguished persons, such as Prof. William James of Harvard, Prof. Myers and others.

The Swami said many things about the various conditions of men after death. After death men have to go through various stages in spirit-life. The man who led here a vicious life must undergo pains and sufferings in a place where absolute darkness reigns in perpetuity. But the case of a man, pious and virtuous, is entirely different.

The Swami continued to describe his various experiences of spirit-communications. At one time he was present in a spiritualistic seance, and a very striking event took place there. A music-box, coated with phosphorus

at its bottom, was placed on a table within a dark room. The room was kept for holding a spiritualistic seance. Its doors and windows were all tightly shut up. Hardly had the seance begun when the music-box was suddenly and visibly lifted up and gradually touched the ceiling. Then like a flying bird, it began to move along the four walls of that room with the full pay of some particular musical tune. Once there was heard a high sound and the box went outside penetrating through the wall. From the outside of the room it began to move in the same way and the flow of the music went on. Then after some fifteen minutes another high sound was heard and the music-box was found in the room. The same tune was still being played. The whole event took only about quarter of an hour.

There happened an incident in another seance which was no less striking. As the Swami was listening there to the message of some spirit, he suddenly felt the touch of a number of hands all over his body. But he found that there were no such persons around him. He was a little surprised when he heard the voices of some spirits addressing him : 'Do you think the medium is doing all these things ?'

Then in that very seance there took place another event which was still more surprising. As the Swami was coming back from the dark screen to resume his seat, he was surprised to find that his chair was occupied by a lady. It was not at all a human being but the materialized body of some spirit. As soon as he came near her, the spirit got up and shook hands with him. He felt that her touch was as tangible and warm as that of a living human body. But in a moment the hand of the spirit, held by him, melted away.

The Swami said that it was possible for some spirits to appear in materialized form without the help of the mediums and they could directly communicate with all. He also said that he had heard how an independent voice in a seance, held in the house of Sir Alfred Turner addressed him and others present there, with these words : 'Good evening, brother'.

But this power of materializing the body is not possessed by all spirits. Only the spirits advanced in psychic power are able to do this. One thing should be made clear, that though the spirits may assume the materialized bodies, they are not conscious of their material state of existence. So they cannot retain such bodies of theirs for long.

In continuation of his speech, the Swami said that the spiritualistic movement had done much towards dispelling many erroneous and superstitious beliefs from the minds of a large number of bigoted and fanatic Christians. It had given a death blow to the queer belief in the confinement of the departed persons under the grave till the last Day of Judgment. The inquisitive minds in America and in other countries no longer believe that the dead are subject to lie beneath the graves and will be resurrected on the Doomsday to go to an unknown place to receive the judgment for their virtues and vices. The unscientific doctrine of eternal hell-fire upheld by the Christian churches is gradually losing its hold on the learned and thinking people in the West. Now it sounds quite ludicrous to all who have thoroughly rationalized their views.

But inspite of all his interest in spiritualistic movement the Swami did not hesitate to expose its demerits and dark sides. He denied its unjust claim that it solved the problems of the religious life of man. It has by no means been helpful to any spiritual aspirant in finding out the way of salvation. It has always proved futile in shaping the religious character of any person. On the contrary, it has misled him. Under the influence of the spiritualistic movement people have been subject to error, and failed to distinguish religion from spiritualism. Spiritualism and religion were things quite contrary in their very nature. The function of spiritualism is to deal with the ghosts and spirits while religion always inspires and enables man to tear off his bonds of miseries and imperfection and realize his higher Self. Obsession with ghosts and the ghost-world degrades the mind, while contemplation of God helps man to raise himself at last to the plane of life divine. In matters spiritual, the spiritualistic movement never comes to any use. The practice of spirit-communication has brought, in many cases, sad results. Spiritualism never elevates the minds of the mediums either intellectually, or morally, or spiritually. Rather it lowers them to a pitiful state. The constant practice of mediumship weakens the mind, destroys the brain-power and the consequence often is insanity and other incurable diseases. Men and women who regularly sit as mediums in spiritualistic seances become like passive and thoughtless creatures. People who come under the evil and pernicious influence of the evil spirits often become like the toys in their hands. They are gradually deprived of the power of reasoning and of the blessings of human life, and they come to a miserable end. One should not therefore confuse spiritualism with religion. The former may satisfy some of our curiosities ; at best it ensures us of the survival of human soul after death. It cannot do anything higher. But the nature of religion is quite different. The practice of religion leads man to the state of unending peace. Religion enables us to transcend the bonds of repeated births and deaths.

In order to transcend the limits and bonds of earthly life, in order to go beyond ignorance, error and untruth, one has to be fully acquainted with the theory and practice of the Vedantic *Sadhana*, generally known as the system of Yoga. Without the practice of Yoga no person would be able to set himself free from the bonds of repeated births and deaths. The sincere and systematic practice of Yoga alone can enable a man to unveil the mystery of his own being. This alone is the way to solve all the problems of the soul, of its birth and death, and its existence before and after its appearance in human form. It is religion, and not spiritualism that can help us to know the true nature of our own being, which is essentially all-wise all-pervading, immutable and Divine. The religious history of the world since ages past has been bearing witness to this fact. All the great seers of Truth, Prophets and Incarnations, who are regarded today as the living embodiments of the spiritual ideal of mankind, had to go through this path of spiritual practice. There ceaseless and sincere efforts made them free for ever from untruth, ignorance and illusion. In attaining to this state of Self-realization they had overcome all sorrows, sufferings and miseries.

It is wrongly beieved by many people that the teachings of the Vedanta make the human life dry and monotonous and that we become pessimists.

Vedanta, they say, is all rationality. Yes, Vedanta supports nothing unreasonable. Nor does it indulge in anything without the process of rational analysis. For, without reason there is no other way to distinguish truth from untruth. This process should be applied in order to know the highest Truth ; and we cannot help this. But it is far from true that the practice of *sadhana* as enjoined by the Vedanta makes our life dry and pessimistic. On the contrary, it sweetnes life with ineffable joy. It leads man to the perennial source of unbounded happiness. The teachings of Vedanta inspire and guide us to realize our oneness and identity with the Infinite. This is the highest goal of all religions. Whosoever realizes this state attains to eternal Bliss even in this life.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WE HAVE GIVEN HERE FROM OUR MEMORY, SOME OF DISCUSSIONS THAT WE WERE PRIVILEGE TO HAVE WITH THE SWAMI.

Q. Swamiji, what becomes of the souls immediately before and after death ?

Ans. The soul immediately before death contracts and withdraws all sense-powers gradually. The physical senses grow dimmer and dimmer as a flickering candle-flame gradually approaches utter extinction ; but the senses and powers grow keen and strong. The soul just before leaving the body lives in an unconscious state like slumber and in that state the astral or spiritual body passes out like a mist.

Q. Then the condition of the souls beyond their grave is awful indeed ?

Ans. Yes. The earthbound spirits suffer much. They do not know that they are dead. In that slumber state the souls carry a concentrated record of their entire lives. When the soul wakes from the sleep they enter into an astral plane. This astral plane is nothing but the projections of the souls' own ideas. Their dimensions are in vibrations. The disembodied souls find their ideas realized in that astral plane. They sleep, but their period of sleeps vary.

Q. Do they not enter then a lonely and foreign realm ?

Ans. Yes. Just to make it clear, let us take an example. Suppose you are an inhabitant of a large and thickly populated city like Calcutta. There happens a terrible earthquake in a dead dark night resulting in a total devastation of the whole city. The houses fall to pieces and the whole city appears like a vast desert enveloped with deep darkness. Then if you are allowed to move and walk freely with your eyes blind-fold, what will be your condition ? Just imagine. Such is the wretched condition of the earthbound spirits after death.

Q. Is it the same condition with all the spirits ?

Ans. No. Ordinary earthbound souls only suffer from it. The case of the virtuous souls is entirely different. They move easily and freely, and can see their ways with the light of their own knowledge and purity.

Q. Swamiji, may we ask you again where the souls really go after death ?

Ans. They go where they already are. Where do you stay when you fall asleep. You then stay in the mind. After death the souls need not go to any other place. They continue to stay in the same mental plane just as we do in our state of sleep or dream (*svapna*). The souls then live in the mental plane or *manomaya jagat*. They move and do everything mentally then in that state. Nothing of material plane remains for them. The bodies in which they dwell at that time are subtle and are made of seventeen subtle elements. They are : Five *pranas*, five *karmendriyas*, five *jnanendriyas*, the *manas* and the *buddhi*. The composite subtle body of seventeen elements is called by the Samkhya and other Hindu philosophies, *sukshmasarira*.

Q. How do the prayers and good thoughts of the living become helpful to the souls departed ?

Ans. I have already said that just after death the souls cannot realize themselves as detached from their previous material bodies. They remain in a swoon and are unconscious immediately after death. In that condition prayers of any kind by the well-wishers help the spirits a good deal. Good thoughts from the relatives and nearest and dearest ones bring an alleviating reaction in their mental planes. Thus they create a certain vibration in their stupified condition of mind, restore their veiled consciousness, and thereby the souls come to know that really they are not in their material bodies. The weeping and wailing of their relatives afflict them with pains and thereby some are dragged down from their astral planes. But good prayers bring back their consciousness and then they try to cross the *borderland*. This borderland in vibration is like a narrow river of ether which can be compared to a neutral zone. It has been called by the Hindus the *Vaitarani*, by the Parsis (Zoroastrians) *Chinnat-bridge* and *Sirat* by the Mohammedans.

Ordinary or earthbound spirits cannot cross this borderland easily. They generally go to a region where prevails permanent darkness. This dark astral plane has been described by the *Upanishads* as :

“*Asurya nama te loka andhena tamasavritah ; tamaste pretyabhi-gacchanti ye ke chatmahano janhha.*”—Isha Upanishad, 1.3 :

‘There are the regions of permanent darkness ; the light of the sun or other luminaries is never seen there. Those that have not realized their true Self or do not strive for Self-realization, must go to that dark region after death.’

The sun, the moon and the stars cannot shine in the spirit-world as they belong to this material world of ours. There is no room for any earthly or material thing in that subtle world beyond death.

Q. Then the condition of the earthbound spirits is worse after death ?

Ans. Yes. In the case of the earthbound souls desires are not fulfilled and so their sufferings become worse and worse. They dig their own graves. All desires for material enjoyment then reach their most acute form. The souls then suffer from the burning flames of those unfulfilled passions.

In fact, what you will sow you will reap. The desires remain in the form of impressions or *samaskaras*. The mind is the receptacle or rather the bundle of the *samaskaras*. The death of the body cannot destroy the *samaskaras*. After death they remain as the seed-forms in the mind.

Q. Swamiji, what is meant by the *double* or astral body ?

Ans. Double or astral body is nothing but an exact counterpart of the physical body. The astral body leaves or goes out of the physical body at the time of death, and when it leaves the latter there remains still a slender thread or cord of astral or vapourlike substance. Finally it also melts away. The soul remains then in a state of coma resembling with the condition of an unborn child in the mother's womb.

Q. Is it possible to communicate with the dead ?

Ans. Certainly. Generally the half-awakened souls manifest themselves in spiritualistic circles through the channel of the medium. Some are dragged

down from their peaceful sleeps to answer our selfish calls and some themselves, are eager enough to communicate. They appear in a dreamy state. Sometimes it has been found that, seeing the mediumistic channel open, they lose their self-control.

Q. Can the disembodied spirits take any material form ?

Ans. Yes, they can. Astral shells or astral corpses of the departed spirits may be materialized temporarily by means of the vitality of the mediums in their unconscious state. They appear in shadowy forms, move and even speak sometimes. Men who have psychic power can see these shadowy forms of the spirits. Experiments have been made by the spiritualists many a time, proving that the psychical corpses can be aroused into apparent life by a strong mediumistic current.

Q. Do the departed souls incarnate again on earth ?

Ans. Yes. Until and unless they are able to break the bonds of desires and transcend the cycles of birth and death, they are born again and again on earth. Sooner or later the departed souls feel a strong desire to manifest themselves again in new life. The seeds of their unsatisfied desires compel them to be born again on earth. So they select their fitting parents, circumstances and surroundings before being born. They fall again into a state of soul-slumber, and die on the astral plane as they did before on earth. By the same cyclic process of evolution and involution they are born in a state of partial slumber. They awake gradually from the dream-like states to the consciousness of the earth-plane.

Q. Is it not good to culture spiritualism for the knowledge of the world beyond death ?

Ans. It is not good, I think, for those who really aspire to realize the supreme knowledge of the *Atman*. It is our aim of life not to acquire knowledge of things fleeting and unreal, but to reach the goal which is the absolute Truth and Blessedness. Spirit-worlds may be true from the empirical point of view, but really they are nothing but the imageries of the human minds. Spirits are unborn and uncreated and are immortal in their nature. Birth and death, coming and passing are merely the appearance. Only through the veil of ignorance a man thinks himself to be dead or born. When his darkness of ignorance is dispelled by the self-effulgent radiance of the *Atman*, he realizes himself as the immortal Bliss. Spiritualism does not help us to transcend the cycles of death and birth ; the knowledge of the Absolute alone can make us free from it.

APPENDIX C

WE REPRODUCE HERE SOME REPORTS OF THE SPEECHES BY THE SWAMI ON THE SUBJECT PUBLISHED IN VARIOUS JOURNALS OF AMERICA.

I

FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA IN SESSION

Intellectual leaders from all over New England present—Opening Address by Dr. Janes—'Conception of Immortality' the topic of this morning.

Large and typically Bostonian audience filled the floor and first gallery of the Hollis Street Theatre this morning, at the 32nd annual convention of the Free Religious Association of America, to which delegates have come from many parts of the continent, but most of the members of which live in this city and vicinity. A glance through the audience showed that a good portion of the intellectual leaders of New England were present.

Former, President, Thomas Wentworth Higginson being absent on account of illness, Dr. Lewis G. Janes of Cambridge, the newly elected president, occupied the Chair at the morning session of the convention, and made a brief opening address, saying that having attended the first meeting of the Free Religious Association as a young man, 32 years ago, he had been profoundly influenced by it, and his whole life changed. He said that he would like to see the whole world come under the banner of free religion and the sects cease to strive against each other. 'I would like,' he continued, 'to see political reforms brought about. When I heard Emerson and Lucretia Mott speak at the initial meeting I thought the presidency of this Society was a position of greater honour than the presidency of the United States; and there has been nothing in the recent conduct of the present incumbent of the later office to modify my youthful opinion.'

'The subject of the morning conference was *The Conception of Immortality*, and the first paper, discussing the philosophical argument, was presented by PROF. JOSIAH ROYCE, Ph.D. of Harvard University. His thesis was a scholarly argument for immortality from the standpoint of a mental philosopher.

'We have no empirical foundation for a belief,' said he, 'that so great an ill as death is to be compensated by a resurrection. Life is full of ills that seem unaccountable, as far as our direct human observation can go. The Teutonic Socrates said that a future life must be believed, if at all, because of its reasonableness in view of what is known and supposed of divine attributes. Certain arguments are becoming humorous from the Society of Psychical Research, but I cannot accept as conclusive the evidence thus collected. Neither the newspapers nor the records of the Society just named have attempted authentic reports of happenings in the world of spirits. The investigators are honest, but the supply of connected facts is limited, and precludes the possibility of deducing broad scientific conclusions.

'That the dead exist, and that they hold communication with the living is incapable of being demonstrated to the world. If the supposed communications are such as could not come from living man, they are naturally ascribed to subjective hallucinations. If, on the other hand, the communications are such as might come from living men, imparting knowledge in the possession of which they are to be explained by telepathy, or some kind of natural influence. Even if spiritual communications could be definitely proved, it would only leave us where savage folklore leaves its votaries, in the assurance that some souls exist somehow—not a specially valuable belief.'

'PROF. ROYCE then proceeded to say what he considers a solid philosophical basis for a full belief in immortality, but in language rather too technical to be appreciated by those not well grounded in psychology. But he made a stout defence of his statement that, as he expressed it, *the ethical individual is not limited to the present form of consciousness.*'

'The argument from psychical research was presented by Prof. James H. Hyslop of Columbia University, the head of the American Society of Psychical Research.'

'Our researches have been handicapped,' said the speaker, 'by erotic and inane deceptions perpetrated upon willing dupes by Spiritualism, and our Society has been called in question because we undertake to apply scientific methods to the investigation of psychical problems. But after a period of struggle for existence the Society of Psychical Research now looks the materialists boldly in the face, challenging them to battle. Our method is the only rational one that can secure the results desired. The business of the philosophers is only to classify and arrange the results we can obtain. All the known facts of physiology seem to point toward the conclusion that consciousness is merely a result of physiological processes, and we must have something more than a *priori* reasoning to disprove the arrangements of materialists, among whom I once numbered myself.'

'Philosophers since the time of Kant cannot well accept any knowledge not based on some form of experience, and it is this experience that our society is engaged in collecting. Even if we receive as genuine all the table-tipping, clairvoyance and the like, it would not even prove the existence of soul, much less its immortality. We must have full knowledge of conditions of isolation in apparent cases of communication from spirits, and know that there is a survival of personal identity in the manifestation which is said to have been received. There must be something learnt by the subject that could not have been known naturally.'

'When I consider the sins and general *cursedness* of humanity, I wonder that men are allowed to live as long as they do. Why would it not be fitting to cleanse the universe by a general and sweeping annihilation? The only objection I would make to this is that it would be too great a reward for the hypocrisy and deceit of some men.'

'I do not hesitate to accept the spiritualistic theory, even if it should let loose a madhouse upon the world. I only insist upon the application of scientific methods to the study and settlement of the great problems of immortality.'

'A brief recess gave the treasurer an opportunity to canvass the audience for funds, and then Miss Anna Boynton Thompson of Boston explained the views of the transcendentalists upon immortality.

'The transcendental theory,' said Miss Thompson, 'considers the consciousness as the gateway of knowledge. God, the uncaused first cause, is freedom, and we are each created in His image ; immortality is quantitative, and lies in the power of every one who wills to have it, working for right for the sake of right. The individuality working the right is as really immortal as God's life, of which it is a part. Only when I will do right for its own sake, do I really exist, and in that case my existence is eternal.

'I believe that the ego is God uncreated, and that itself creates, seeing the divine will in its constant progress, doing the will actualizing the divine vision. Be ye yourselves the Christ, and ye are yourselves immortal life.'

"Because of the lateness of the hour, President Janes omitted his paper, which included the scientific argument, and introduced as the last speaker, the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, now working in the United States as a Hindu missionary.

'The Swami said that the doctrine of immortality had its origin among the Aryans of ancient India. He quoted from the Book of Ecclesiastes to show that Solomon had no faith in a future life after death and said that the world is still full of agnostics, who deny that after a man dies he can live again. The miraculous resurrection of a single person no longer is enough to make a living hope in a future life. Those who believe in that resurrection may deny hope for the future to us who doubt it, but their words no longer strongly influence the world.'

'The impenetrable wall that seems to surround those who would look beyond the grave is simply the idea men have that the soul is produced by the body and that when the body is destroyed, the soul is also ended. The Hindus believe that each individual soul has existed before, meaning by soul the subtle body or ego, the germ of life. When this germ has finished its work in one physical body, it drops the old envelope and manufactures a new one. This ego is imperishable. As to death, we may say there is no annihilation in the universe, but, it is full of change, and the subtle body continues to change through evolution, until the purposes of life are fulfilled, perfection attained, and all the inherent powers fully developed. We understand that this subtle body is not our true nature but a receptacle for that nature a spirit which forms a part of the universal Spirit, like a circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere. This inclusive Spirit is the ultimate, absolute, God, worshipped in different parts of the world as Allah, Christ, Buddha, or Father in heaven. He is free from all changes, and subject to no limitations. This Spirit fills all the universe, and embraces all life, is the source of all actions.

'The object of all religions is the same, the attainment of immortality, the cultivation of the soul. Christianity misses its ideal when it turns to dogmas and beliefs, instead of pursuing soul culture.'

—BOSTON HERALD, JUNE 2, 1899.

II

NEW ENGLAND CREMATION

THEY LISTEN TALKS BY JOHN STORER
COBB, THEIR FOUNDER AND BY
SWAMI ABHEDANANDA :

(A)

A public meeting was held under the auspices of the New England Cremation Society yesterday afternoon in Wesleyan Hall. Harrison Otis Apthorp, President of the Society, presided, and brief addresses were made by Rev. Paul Revere Forthingham of New Bedford, Rev. Samuel M. Crothers of Cambridge, the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, who spoke on *Cremation in India*, John Storer Cobb, founder of the Society, and others:

'Rev. Mr. Forthingham spoke of the great antiquity of the practice of cremation. It was formerly a sort of religious ceremony, and very sacred, and a distinguished honour to the bodies of the dead to be burned. There had always been something deeply religious about flame, and even now there was something sacred about the use of fire. The practice of cremation strengthened spirituality in man, in his opinion, for it emphasized the distinction between the spirit and the body.'

Rev. Samuel M. Crothers of Cambridge also spoke strongly in favour of cremation 4 4.

'The SWAMI ABHEDANANDA told of the practice of cremation in his country, which, he said, dated from prehistoric times. It has deemed the most healthful way of disposing of the bodies of the dead. It was believed by the Parsees that the body should be destroyed as soon as possible after the spirit had left it. The Hindoos believed the spirit was entirely separate from the body. The spirit was the real man, and the body was but the shell in which it was kept.'

—BOSTON JOURNAL, JUNE 2, 1899

(B)

'A native Hindoo, SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, a young man with an intelligent face and a command of the choicest English, spoke most interestingly of cremation in India, saying that it dated from prehistoric times. There was no need of cremation societies. The Hindoos know this way of disposing of the dead.

'Unlike the Egyptians who associated the body and soul so closely that they could not conceive of the one existing without the other, and so were driven to the embalming of the one to make sure the happy existence of the other. The Hindoos held the higher view that the soul was everything and the body nothing—only the house in which the man lived and to be reduced to nothingness as soon as possible after its immortal tenant had gone out of it.'

—BOSTON TRAVELLER, JUNE 2, 1899.

III

DELIVERED IN THE OUTLOOK
CLUB, NEW YORK

'We think that at birth, the soul comes from God. The Hindu believes that the soul exists before and after the death of the body. This belief solves many problems of life ; it explains all the inequalities that we often find. Happiness and misery are a result of past incarnation. We create our own destiny. The soul takes its future form according to its desires. The desire to see produced the eye, to hear the ear. The soul must reach perfection sooner or later, for no soul can be lost. Heaven and hell are mental conditions, and the ultimate goal is the manifestation of divinity. The word 'Buddha' means enlightened, and there are many types of Buddhas. To work and not think of the results is the highest form of action. Love, when true, seeks no return.'

—DAILY EVENING ITEM, LYNN : MASS, TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 1900.

IV

PURE IDEALISM THE BASIS :
SWAMI ABHEDANANDA SPEAKS ON :

Indian Mystics and their methods of attaining perfection demonstrated.

The Swami said that * * the human soul was immortal being an emanation from the Infinite Spirit, and always had existed and always will. The immortal must be so at the beginning as well as at the end. No religion was of any use that did not teach the past immortality of the soul, as well as the future.

'The present state of the spirit depended on the past, and the future upon the present. We take character with us through death, and nothing else. That character was made up of every act and thought, that inevitably react upon the doer. 'What thou thinkest, that shalt thou become.' This was the great law of *karma*, which was merely the scientific law of causation * *'.

—THE MALL AND EMPIRE, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1905.

V

EAST INDIAN TALKS ON SPIRITUALISM
FROM HIS OWN EXPERIENCE

'*Spiritualistic Mediumship* was the subject of a lecture delivered yesterday by SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, at the Vedanta Society's room, 62. West Seventy-first Street. He said that he had seen materializations and had received spirit messages both in Sanskrit and Bengali about which he believed there was no mistake.

'Admitting the fundamental facts of Spiritualism, he denounced the practice of mediumship, declaring that the negative state essential to it led in many cases to loss of memory, loss of the power of reasoning and self-control, to the dulling of the moral sense and not infrequently to insanity. For this

reason in India from ancient times the Yogis and spiritual teachers have always guarded their pupils and disciples from becoming mediums and have instead taught them how they could develop the psychic powers which would make them masters of themselves and the realm of spirits.'

—NEW YORK HERALD, FEBRUARY 13, 1905.

VI

'There is some good in Spiritualism,' said the Swami. 'Why did we come into life all of a sudden if we did not live before and will not live after life leaves the human body?' he asked.

'Treating the question of immortality, scientifically, the Swami declared: *Science shows something cannot come out of nothing, that life must have existed in substance before it came into the human body.*'

—PITTSBURGH POST, JANUARY 26, 1907.

VII

'Vedanta, it is claimed, explains the fundamental principles of Spiritualism, tells us how the soul exists after death, what kind of soul can communicate with us, and how the earth-bound souls, being subject to the law of *karma* and causation, reincarnate on this earth taking human form again and again.'

—CHICAGO INTER OCEAN, OCTOBER 26, 1908.

VIII

WEST CORNWALL SWAMI DISCUSSES HIS PHILOSOPHY :

* * What is the Vedanta theory of the transmigration of the soul? Let me say first that we believe that the souls of the departed takes up the new life in human bodies, as opposed to the Platonic view that the soul sometimes takes up the new existence in the body of an animal.

'The Indian version of transmigration is that each soul is bound to receive its body as a natural consequence of its former deeds and misdeeds, and not to have free choice of its lot. This is the law of cause and effect. The universal law of cause and effect, let me add, was discovered by the great thinkers of India. They gave it the Sanskrit term *karma*. This law of *karma* has become one of the fundamental truths of modern science. Scientists gave it different names. They variously term it the law of causation, the law of compensation, the law of action and reaction, etc. But they all have the same idea in mind, namely that every cause is productive of a corresponding result that every action is productive of a corresponding result, that every action is productive of a corresponding reaction.

'The law of *karma* controls our birth and re-birth. Our belief is that the parents do not create the souls. They are merely the channels through which the migrating souls receive their material forms. The souls come with their desires.

'When death comes, the soul does not manifest itself until the surroundings become favourable for a manifestation.

'Our belief that the soul takes up new life in the human body, and never in the body of an animal, makes our theory one of re-incarnation rather than of mere transmigration. Why should the soul choose to become an animal? We argue, by the process of evolution the human soul has already passed through different stages of animal-dom. It would not want to revert to animalism. It is unscientific to think otherwise

'A noted professor has said of the theory of transmigration : *None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality.*

—WATERBUT HERALD, 'CONN.' (Editorial Sec.), OCT. 14, 1917.

IX

THE SWAMI ARRIVES :

'Five miles from West Cornwall the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA, Hindu philosopher and well-known writer on Vedantism, holds forth. * *

'I am a teacher of philosophy,' said the Swami, 'the Vedanta philosophy, or religion, as you choose to call it. The fundamental principle of this school of thought is a belief in the immortality of the soul. After the death of the body, the soul continues to live, but for sometime it goes neither to heaven nor to hell. It gravitates. Take the souls of the soldiers who die on the battlefields. For the most part these men are so suddenly killed that they are not conscious of their corporeal non-existence. For a time their souls remain on different planes of the spiritual world. Then, according to the worth that each man displayed on earth, his soul is dealt with. The worthy are rewarded, the unworthy punished. But there is no eternal damnation. We consider such ideas foolish. Not only shall we all be saved, but eventually we shall all, like God, be perfect.

We believe that there is a heaven to meet the desires of each and every one of us ; in other words, that there is a musician's heaven, an artists' heaven, a heaven for the mechanically inclined, etc. When I speak of heaven and hell, I do not speak of them as being definite destinations of the soul. Heaven and hell are merely mental conditions. Suppose, for instance, a man were a miser all of his life. After death his punishment would be a continuation of his earthly logging for gold, with the attendant impossibility of gratifying this desire.

'It is our idea that one's present existence on earth is an expression of the past lives that one has led. We believe that there is an indefinite series of births and re-births ; that through this process enlightenment comes to us.'

—NEW YORK HERALD, SUNDAY, OCT. 14, 1917.

APPENDIX D

NOTES

1. *Foot note 8, p. 12* : The Lokayata school believes consciousness or soul to be the product of physical elements.

It says the soul is nothing but a by-product of the four physical elements, earth, water, fire and air,—“*prithivya apaha tejo vayuh iti chattari tattvani tebhya chaitanyam iti.*” According to the Lokayatas the existence of the soul or consciousness ceases to function with the death of the physical body,—“*paralokinobhavat paralokabhava iti.*” Therefore, there is no such thing like the world after death. The soul means, according to them, the physical body which dies.

2. *Foot note 14, p. 18* : ‘When Ralph Waldo Emerson went to meet Carlyle in London, Carlyle presented to Emerson a copy of the English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* by Charles Wilkins and said, ‘I have been inspired by the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita* and I hope that you will be similarly inspired by them. ‘Emerson after reading the *Gita* wrote that beautiful poem on *Brahm.*’—Swami Abhedananda : *Leaves from My Diary*, p. 38.
3. *Foot note 18, p. 21* : The resurrection of the corpse was one of the earliest beliefs about the soul after death. Some say that the belief in, and the conception of, the soul or a ‘double apart from the body grew out of the sun’s daily rise and setting. As the sun sets and rises again in the sky in the next morning, so the soul of a man leaves the body to enter it again after the interval of a certain length of a specified time.

This early conception of the Vedic Aryans was transmitted through the trade route to Egypt, Babylon, Phoenecia, and other countries lying on either coast of the Mediterranean sea giving rise to the kindred allegorical stories of Tammuz, Attis, Adonis, Osirs, Demeter, Istar, Cybele, Apphrodite, Hermes, Mithras and other legends of the kind. The solar origin of these deities as well as of the Jesus the Christ has been recognized by J. M. Robertson, Arthur Drews, Conybeare and a whole host of European scholars. Sir Frazer on the other hand ascribes the phenomena of resurrection upon the annual suspension and the rejuvenation of the plant-life in the seasons of winter and spring respectively.

4. *Foot note 3, p. 28* : ‘Embalming is a method of preserving bodies by injections and dressings, either internally or externally applied. ‘This term is generally given to the process employed by the ancient Egyptians and others, by which corpses were preserved as

mummies * *. The most elaborate process was somewhat as follows :

'A deep cut was made beneath the ribs on the left side, and through the opening thus made the internal organs were removed, with the exception of the heart and kidneys. The brain was also extracted through the nose by means of a bent iron instrument. The cavities of the skull and trunk were washed out with palm-wine, and filled with raisins, Cassia, and similar substances ; and the skull was dressed by injecting drugs of various kinds through the nostrils. The body was then soaked in natron for seventy days. It was then removed and wrapped carefully in linen cloth, cemented by gums.

'The less expensive process consisted in removing only the brains and injecting the viscera with cedar oil. When the body was soaked in natron for the same period of time (seventy days). the viscera and soft parts came away *en masae*, and only the skin and bones were left . The very poor, who could not afford either of the above methods, embalmed their dead by washing the body in myrrh and salting it for seventy days.'WH. Carrington & Meader : *Death*, pp. 85-86.

5. *Foot note 0, p. 29* : We find in the Rig Veda, both the customs of burial (*enagnidhana*) and cremation (*agnidhṛna*) are mentioned in the same 10th Mandala. From the 14th to 18th Mandalas. Yama, Agni and others. In the 1st Mantra of the 16th Sukta there is mentioned : "*mainamagne bi daho nabhi shocho, masyatvachang chiktipa ma sariram : yada sritam krinavo jatavedo themenam pra rinutat pithbhya.*" That is, 'O Agni, do not burn the dead body completely, do not give him pain, do not scatter his skin or body. When his body will be burnt well with your flames, do send him to the *pitri-loka*.'

This invoking Mantra bears testimony to the fact not of complete but of partial cremation. In the 18th Sukta from 10th to 14th Mantras it is found again that there are the customs of complete burial : "*upa sarpa matam bhumime-tamuruvyachasam prithivim suchevam*" etc. The fractional burial was also in vogue amongst the ancient Vedic peoples. In the 14th Mantra of the 15th Sukta of the Rig Veda we find again : "*ye agnidagdha ye anagnidagha*" etc. This no doubt indicates both the customs cremation and burial.

6. *Foot note 1, p. 00* : The early Buddhists held that there is no such thing as *soul in the sense* 'a permanent unchangeable entity.' Prof. Stcherbatsky : 'A personality (*puḍgal*) in which other systems imagine the presence of a permanent spiritual principle, a soul (*Atman*), is in reality a bundle of elements or forces (*sainkarasamuha*). It contains nothing permanent or substantial, it is *anatma*.' (*Conception of Nirvana*, p. 8). Instead of

Atta or *Atma* only the *shandhasantana* which has been compared to the flame of a lamp, is admitted by some of the schools of the Buddhists. They maintain a changing group of entities called the five *skandhas* which alone constitute a being regarded as *Atta* or soul. These *skandhas* may be of the grossest or the subtlest form but they are in the continual flux of elements.

The philosophy of *Lankavatara* also explains this theory in the following manner: 'The *Skandhas*, *Dhatu*s, and *Ayatanas* have nothing personal in them; there is no 'me and mine' in them* *. The material world as well as the physical body are manifestations of the mind known as *Alayavijnana*, and when they are discriminated as particular existences, we are discriminating our own mind-made. When thus created they are seen in constant transmigration, they never remain even for a moment as they are, they flow like a stream, they change like a seed, they flicker like a candle light, they move like the wind or like a cloud. Owing to the habit-energy (*vasana*) * * we now transmigrate from one state to another revolving like a wheel, like a machine, like a phantom creation, or like a walking ghost.'—D. T. Suzuki: *Studies in the Lankavatara-Sutra*, p. 167.

7. *Foot note 13, p. 47*: In the Avesta of the Parsees we find the words: *Astabanta* (*Astibat*) and *Manahya* (*Manasya*): i.e., the worlds, visible and invisible. There we also come across the word *Yima* (Sanskrit *Yama*), the son of *Bibinghat* (Sanskrit *Vaivasvat*). According to the Avesta, the soul remains swooned just after its death. For continuous three days and nights, the soul begins to think of its deeds, good or bad, done during its life time. The attachment for its nearest and dearest ones remains only for three days and nights, and after that it departs from there either for heaven or hell. We find in the *Zend-Avesta* (Yast XXII): Zarathustra asked Ahura-Mazda: 'O Ahura-Mazda, when one of the faithful departs this life, where does his soul abide on that night?' Ahura-Mazda answered: 'It takes its seat near the head singing the *Ushtavatiti Gatha*;' etc. Vide Swami Abhedananda: *Great Saviours of the World* (now edition), pp. 65-113.
8. *Foot note 1, p. 48*: Dr. Inge says that transmigration or rebirth is incorrectly called 'metempsychosis.' He says that *Metempsychosis* or *Palingenesis* are the right words, since it is the bodies, not the souls, that are changed to rebirth.—
9. *Foot note 2, p. 46*: Except Pythagoras and Plato other celebrated Greek philosophers and historians maintained the same belief regarding it. As we find 'according to Herodotus (II. 123)', J. F. Clarke quotes, 'the soul must pass through all animals, fishes, insects, and birds; in short, must complete the whole circuit of animated existence, before it again enters the body of a man; and this circuit of the souls is performed in three thousand years.' *The Great Religions*, p. 226.

Empedocles believed that the cause of transmigration was sin and the full terms of transmigration covered 30,000 years. But he said that finally the soul would become a god. This view more or less coincides with the Pauranic theory of the Hindus. The Pauranic theory says that soul transmigrates from the lower to the higher births 84,00,000 times and ultimately returns to human form again. Pnder believed that only the bad were condemned to transmigration and the good went to the sky, the air, Elysium or Olympus. But 'Porphyry and Iamblichus,' as Dr. Inge reminds us, 'refuse to believe that human souls are ever sent to inhabit the bodies of beasts and birds.' 'The earliest Hermetic document, the *Kore Kosmou*, is dated probably to 510, B.C., and certainly within a century after that, by an allusion to the Persian rule. * * metempsychosis is assumed between human and animal bodies, the soul is individual, and at death it returns to its proper position in the sixty regions between the earth and moon. Thence it seems to have been conducted to earth again for a reincarnation.'—Cf. W: M. Felinders Petric : *Aspects of Egyptian Religion*, (Oxford: *History of Religions*, Vol. I, p. 196) : Most of the poets, philosophers and celebrated historians of ancient Greece believed in the existence and immortality of the human soul beyond grave. Erwin Rohde in his celebrated book *Psyche* has shown clearly how the cult of souls and the beliefs in the immortality of the soul were prevalent among the Dionysic Religion, the Orphics, the philosophers, and the poets in Greece of the glorious past days. Dr. Ings states : '* * belief in immortality was less general in the first century than it is among ourselves, and decidedly less general than it became two hundred years later. * * the Romans were disposed to believe in some sort of shadowy survival, which justified family meetings at the grave and the customary tributes to the departed spirit. * * But the belief in ghosts and apparitions * seems to have been almost universal in the second century, except among the 'godless Epicureans,' Plutarch, Dion Cassius, the younger Pliny, and Suetonius all believed in spiritualism ; and Neoplatonism, with its doctrine of 'daemous' did nothing to discourage it. The decay of Aristotelianism removed obstacles to free belief in immortality, * *. The main doctrines of Orphism were the probation of the Soul in this life as a preparation for eternity, * and the rebirth of souls in higher or lower forms, determined by the merits and demerits of the subject in its previous state of existence.'—(*Plotinus*, Vol. I. pp. 52-53).

10. Foot note 4, p. 58: Cf. Swami Abhedananda: *Reincarnation*, p. 97, and Dr. Pringle-Pattison : *The Idea of Immortality*, p. 108. In the *Upanishads* we find the following passages which mention the retrogression of human souls to lower and animal bodies :
 (i) "Atha ya etau panthanau na viduste kitah patanga yadidam dandashukam."—(*Brihadaranyakas Upanishad*, 6.2.16). That is,

'those who do not know these two paths (*dakshinayana* and *uttarayana*) they become insects and moths, and these frequently biting things (gnats and mosquitoes).'

(ii) "*That ye iha ramanryacharana abhyashoyatte ramntyam yonsmapaderan Brahamanayonim va ksatriyayonim va vaisyayonimva atha ye iha kapuyacharana abhyashoyatte kapuyam yonimapadyeran. shvayonim va shukarayonim va chandalayonim va.*"—(Chandogya Upanishad, 5.10.7). That is, 'those who have been of good conduct here would quickly attain good birth—birth of Bahmana, birth of Kshatriya, or birth of Vaisya. And those who have been of bad conduct here attain evil birth,—the birth of a dog, the birth of a hog, or the birth of a Chandala.'

(iii) "*Yoni manye prapadyante sariratvaya dehinah ; sthanumanye nuamyanti yathakarma yashashrutam.*"—(Katha Upanishad, 2.2.7). That is, 'some souls according to their Karma and inclination of mind receive another birth, and some others again are degenerated into the states of trees and stones.'

(iv) In the *Sankhayana Aranyaka* (Ch. II, 2) and *Kausitaki-Brahmana Upanishad*, (1-1-6), we find it is mentioned : "** chandramasastham yat pretyaha * * a iha kito va patango va shakunir va shardulo va simho va mastyo va parashva va * * pratyajoyate.*" That is, 'those who depart from this world shall go to the moon. * * He is born on earth as a worm, or a grasshopper, or a fish, or a bird, or a lion, or a boar, or a snake, or a tiger, or a man, or another creature, in one or other station according to his deeds and his knowledge.'

11. *Foot note 2, p. 138:* Grant Allen mentions: 'It is the universal Catholic custom to place the relics of saints or martyrs under the altars in churches. Thus the body of St. Mark the evangelist lies under the high altar of St. Mark's, at Venice ; and in every other Italian Cathedral, or chapel, a reliquary is deposited within the altar itself. So well understood is this principle in the Latin Church that it has hardened into the saying, 'No. relic, no altar.' The sacrifice of the Mass takes place at such an altar, and is performed by a priest in sacrificial robes. The entire Roman Catholic ritual is a ritual derived from the earlier sacerdotal ideas of ministry at an altar, and its connection with the primitive form is still kept up by the necessary presence of human remains in its holy places.

Furthermore, the very idea of a church itself is descended from the early Christian meeting-places in the catacombs or at the tombs of the martyrs, which are universally allowed to have been the primitive Christian altars. * * Thus Christianity is linked on to the very antique custom of worship at tombs, and habit of ancestor-worship by altars, relics, and invocation of saints, even revolutionary Protestantism still retaining some last faint marks

of its origin in the dedication of churches to particular evangelists or martyrs, and in the more or less disguised survival of altar, priesthood, sacrifice, and vestments.'—*The Evolution of the Idea of God*, pp. 24-26.

12. *Foot note 11, p. 194:* In the *Sraddha* ceremony of the Hindoos an effigy (*Brahmana*) made of Kusa-grass (*darbhāmaya-Brahmana*) is placed and worshipped as an image or a representative of the dead. In the *Vrisotsarga-sraddha* ceremony, there is used again a *Yupa* made of the Vilva tree which is called the *Vrisakastha* in the shape of a man or woman. This idol or the wooden post is preserved after the *Sraddha* ceremony is over as the symbol or image of the deceased.

We find again that there is current a custom of burning the effigy which is called the *paranaradaha* or *Kusaputtalika* as a different kind of cremation ceremony of the Hindus. This ceremony is observed when the dead body of the deceased is not found. This effigy is made of 360 leaves of *palasa* or *sara* according to the *Suddhitattva*.

The similar custom is also found in many other nations of the world. Cf. Frazer : *Golden Bough*, pt. IV, Vol. 1, pp. 250-259 ; Grant Allen : *Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 94 ; R. M. Dorman : *The Origin of Primitive Superstitions*, p. 117 ; Dr. E. O. James : *Comparative Religion*, pp. 311-312 ; Elliot Smith : *Egyptian Mummies*, F. E. A., 1914, p. 192 ; A. W. Benn : *The Greek Philosopher*, p. 503 ; W. Budge : *Book of the Dead*. Ch. VI ; L. A. Waddell : *Buddhism in Tibet or Lamaism*, p. 405.

13. *Foot note 1, p. 177:* This statement of Swami Abhedananda reminds us two of the instances which we were privileged to hear from him. He said that when he was in America, he saw in one evening a face of a discarnate spirit floating in the air before him. The face of the spirit looked pale marked with pain and agony. The Swami asked the spirit : 'What ails you ?' The voice came. 'Help me. Help me. I am suffering. I have committed suicide.' The Swami blessed him by saying : 'If you think my prayers and blessings will help you, you have my good wishes, I am praying for you. Peace be unto you.' The Swami saw that the pale and gloomy face of the spirit lighted up, who then melted away smiling. The other instance was of a spirit of a sailor who was drowned in the sea. He too appeared before him like one groping in darkness. The Swami asked him : 'What's wrong with you ?' The spirit replied that he did not know, he was drowned. He requested the Swami to help him. The Swami then prayed for him, and he melted away with his look bright and peaceful.

It will not be out of place to mention here again that Swami Abhedananda heard also the voice of his brother disciple Swami Adbhutananda (Latu Maharaj) immediately after his passing

away in India. The Swami heard one day a heavy voice in the air : 'Kali Kali.' He immediately looked around, but found no body. He asked who he was, and the voice came : 'I am Latu. I have come to see you.' The Swami apprehended the passing away of his beloved brother and it came to be true as he received the cablegram next day bearing the sad news of Swami Adbhutananda's demise.

The Swami also saw the materialized spirit of the Poet Girisa Candra Ghose, who was spitting on all sides as he appeared. The explanation of that act of Girisa Chandra was given by the Swami as : As we spit on a useless ephemeral thing so the Poet being free from the bondage of his earthly body spat on the ephemeral worldly things, which bears no actual value or reality in comparison with the Absolute existence.

APPENDIX E

EXTRACTS FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE ANCIENT HINDUS AND THOSE OF THE MYSTICS, POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS, AS REGARDS THE PRE-EXISTENCE AND IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL :

“O Agni, make warm that part of this deceased which is birthless and eternal with thy heat. Let thy brightness and thy flame make that part of his heated. O Jataveda Agni, take this departed soul to the spheres of the pious and virtuous with thy forms of welfare.”

—RIGVEDA, X, 16.4.

“This man has only two abodie., this and the next world.” (4.3.9). “Exhausting the results of whatever work he did in this life, he returns from that world to this for (fresh) work.’ Thus does the man who desires transmigrate.” (4.4.6) :

“The Self is taintless, beyond the (subtle) ether, birthless, infinite and constant.” (4.4.20).

—BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD.

“Mortal is the body, held by death ;—it is the abode of that Immortal (unbodied) Self. The bodied one is held by pleasure and pain ; * * but pleasure and pain do not touch the unbodied Self.”

—CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD.

‘The soul must be a thing both uncreated and immortal * * And then it is that a human soul passes into the life of a beast, and from a beast who was once a man the soul comes back into a man again.’

—PLATO.

‘It (soul) is an absolute reality. * * it exists before ever it belongs to a body.’

—PLOTINUS.

‘The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal.’

—SPINOZA.

‘The soul is always joined with the aggregate of subordinate Monads, though not always with the same ones. * * not the soul only, but every living thing is imperishable. * * Death is decrease and involution, birth increase and evolution.’ The dying creature takes only a portion of its bodily machine and returns to the slumberous or germinal condition of *evolution*, in which it existed before birth. * *. Pre-existence as well as post-existence must be conceded both to animals and men.’

—LEIBNITZ.

'The soul is indivisible, incorporeal, unextended, and it is consequently incorruptible. * * Such a being therefore is indissoluble by the force of nature ; that is to say, *the soul of man is naturally immortal.*'

—BERKELEY.

'Now, this endless progress (*progress ad infinitum*) is only possible on the supposition of an *endless* duration of the *existence* and personality of the same rational being (which is called the immortality of the soul). The *summum bonum*, then, practically is only possible on the supposition of the immortality of the soul.'

—IMMANUEL KANT.

'Man as Spirit is immortal, is an object of God's interest, is raised above finitude and dependence,* * that he has freedom to abstract himself from everything, and this implies that he can escape mortality.'

—HEGEL.

'The immortal *psyche* remains, with fettered pinions, fastened to the earth.'

'Death in Nature is Birth, and in Death itself appears visibly the exaltation of Life. There is no destructive principle in Nature, for Nature throughout is pure, unclouded Life ; * * Death and Birth are but the struggle of Life with itself to assume a more glorious and congenial form. * * and what mortals call Death is the visible appearance of this second Life. * * Death is the ladder by which my spiritual vision rises to a new Life and a new Nature.'

—FICHTE.

'The finite self is plainly a partial world, yet possesses within it the principle of infinity, taken in the sense of the *nisus* towards absolute unity and self-completion.'

—B. BOSANQUET.

'I communicate my view, not of course in order to convert any one to my opinion, but because I am convinced that a serious study of these phenomena is of the greatest importance to psychology, and because I think that my personal confession may lead a reader or two to approach the region of investigation which is usually treated with contempt by 'so-called men of science.'

—PROF. WILLIAM JAMES.

'We never become, for our own rational consciousness, perfect individual selves. Yet all our empirical life has meaning, and constitutes the life of one Self, just in so far, but only in so far, as this our empirical life is consciously viewed by ourselves as a process of progressing towards the fulfilment of our individual and consciously chosen ideal.'

—PROF. JOSIAH ROYCE.

'Any evidence which will prove immortality will also prove pre-existence. * * each of us exists through all time—past and future.'

'Human selves are among the fundamental differentiations of the universe, and that they are therefore, *sub specie temporis*, immortal.'

—DR. MACTAGGART.

Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek.'

—P. B. SHELLEY.

'For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,

Shall changes, shal becomes first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O Thou Soul of my soul I shall clasp Thee again,
And with God be the rest.'

—R. BROWNING.

'From is born of that which is without form,
And goes again, for *verily to Him do we return.*'

—AL-GHAZALI : *Masnavi.*

'Of my soul's union with this fleshly frame,
Of life and death Thou art the end and aim.

'The forms which clothe existence only stay
One moment, in the next they pass away ;
This subtle point is proven by the text ;*
Its fashion altereth from day to day.'

—JIMT : *Lawa'ih.*

