

# KARMA LORE

## ONE


H.P. Blavatsky

H.S. Olcott

W.Q. Judge



Eastern School Press



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## PREFACE

The first chapter, which we have titled "What is Karma?," is a reprint of section XI of *The Key to Theosophy*, by H. P. Blavatsky; and chapter two, which we have titled "Karma in Practical Life," is a reprint of section XII, less the last two sub-sections. *The Key to Theosophy* was written with the express purpose of clearly explaining fundamental doctrines such as Karma, at the request of students of *The Secret Doctrine*. The reprints here are taken from the second and revised American edition, Theosophical Publishing Company, New York, 1896.

The third chapter, titled "Karma: The Twelfefold Chain of Causation," introduces the Buddhist teaching of Patichcha Samuppāda, or the Twelve Nidānas. It consists of excerpts from *The Buddhist Catechism*, by H.S. Olcott, and a passage from the *Mahāvagga*, translated by the Mahatma K. H. (in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, letter 10).

As is well-known, Buddhism is a non-theistic religion. The questions of life which other religions answer by recourse to the unfathomable will of God, Buddhism explains rationally by tracing the workings of the Law of Karma, or cause and effect. This they describe in terms of the Twelfefold Chain of Causation. As correct comprehension of this doctrine is dependent on a world-view which does not include a God, such as the Buddhist, it has been thought useful to open this chapter with the fourteen Fundamental Buddhistic Beliefs. These, drafted by H. S. Olcott and accepted by Buddhists throughout the world, form perhaps the most concise statement of the Buddhist world-view. (It is worth noting that the two great non-theistic religions, Buddhism and Jainism, holding instead the doctrine of

Karma, have the best history of human rights and non-violence in the world.)

The chapter concludes with a simple statement of the Twelve Nidānas from the *Mahāvagga*, which scarcely hints at their profundity. Recall the statements of H. P. Blavatsky:

“The Nidānas belonging to the most subtle and abstruse doctrines of the Eastern metaphysical system, it is impossible to go into the subject at any greater length.”

*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 229

“It is here that the teachings of esoteric philosophy in relation to the Nidānas and the Four Truths become of the greatest importance; but they are secret.”

*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, p. 45

The last chapter, titled “Aphorisms on Karma,” was published simultaneously in *The Path* and *Lucifer*, March 1893, by William Q. Judge. He writes that “they were declared to be from manuscripts not now accessible to the general public.” These hitherto esoteric aphorisms may provide material for those who wish to follow the advice given by K. H.:

“... you can do nothing better than to study the two doctrines — of Karma and Nirvana — as profoundly as you can.” They are “the double key to the metaphysics of Abhidharma . . .” “Karma and Nirvana are but two of the seven great MYSTERIES of Buddhist metaphysics; . . .”

*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, letter 16

Karl Alston  
David Reigle



## WHAT IS KARMA?

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### PERIODICAL REBIRTHS.

INQ.—*You mean, then, that we have all lived on earth before in many past incarnations, and shall go on so living?*

THEO.—I do. The life-cycle, or rather the cycle of conscious life, begins with the separation of the mortal animal man into sexes, and will end with the close of the last generation of men in the seventh round and seventh race of mankind. Considering we are only in the fourth round and fifth race, its duration is more easily imagined than expressed.

INQ.—*And we keep on incarnating in new personalities all the time?*

THEO.—Most assuredly so; because this life-cycle or period of incarnation may be best compared to human life. As each such life is composed of days of activity separated by nights of sleep or of inaction, so in the incarnation-cycle an active life is followed by a devachanic rest.

INQ.—*And it is this succession of births that is generally defined as reincarnation?*

THEO.—Just so. It is only through these births that the perpetual progress of the countless millions of Egos toward

final perfection, and a final rest as long as was the period of activity, can be achieved.

INQ.—*And what is it that regulates the duration or special qualities of these incarnations ?*

THEO.—Karma, the universal law of retributive justice.

INQ.—*Is it an intelligent law ?*

THEO.—For the materialist, who calls the law of periodicity which regulates the marshaling of bodies, and all the other laws in Nature, blind forces and mechanical laws, no doubt Karma would be a law of chance and no more. For us no adjective or qualification could describe that which is impersonal and not an entity, but a universal operative law. If you question me about the causative intelligence in it, I must answer you, I do not know. But if you ask me to define its effects and tell you what these are in our belief, I may say that the experience of thousands of ages has shown us that they are absolute and unerring equity, wisdom, and intelligence. For Karma in its effects is an unfailing redresser of human injustice, and of all the failures of Nature ; a stern adjuster of wrongs ; a retributive law which rewards and punishes with equal impartiality. It is, in the strictest sense, "no respecter of persons," though, on the other hand, it can neither be propitiated nor turned aside by prayer. This is a belief common to Hindûs and Buddhists, who believe in Karma.

INQ.—*In this Christian dogmas contradict both, and I doubt whether any Christian will accept the teaching.*

THEO.—No ; and Inman gave the reason for it many years ago. As he puts it :

The Christians will accept any nonsense, if promulgated by the church as a matter of faith ; . . . the Buddhists hold that nothing which is contradicted by sound reason can be a true doctrine of Buddha.

The Buddhists do not believe in any pardon for their sins, except after an adequate and just punishment for each evil deed or thought in a future incarnation, and a proportionate compensation to the parties injured.

INQ.—*Where is it so stated?*

THEO.—In most of their sacred works. In the *Wheel of the Law* (p. 57) you may find the following Theosophical tenet:

Buddhists believe that every act, word, or thought has its consequence, which will appear sooner or later in the present or in the future state. Evil acts will produce evil consequences, good acts will produce good consequences: prosperity in this world or birth in heaven [Devachan] . . . in the future state.

INQ.—*Christians believe the same thing, do they not?*

THEO.—Oh no; they believe in the pardon and the remission of all sins. They are promised that if they only believe in the blood of Christ—an *innocent* victim!—in the blood offered by him for the expiation of the sins of the whole of mankind, it will atone for every mortal sin. And we believe neither in vicarious atonement, nor in the possibility of the remission of the smallest sin by any God—not even by a *personal* Absolute or Infinite, if such a thing could have any existence. What we believe in is strict and impartial justice. Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a power which cannot fail, and can therefore have neither wrath nor mercy, but only absolute equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects. The saying of Jesus, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. vii. 2), neither by expression nor implication points to any hope of future mercy or salvation by proxy. This is why, recognizing as we do in our philosophy the justice of this statement, we cannot recommend too strongly mercy, charity, and forgiveness of mutual

offenses. "Resist not evil" and "render good for evil" are Buddhist precepts, and were first preached in view of the implacability of karmic law. For man to take the law into his own hands is in any case a sacrilegious presumption. Human law may use restrictive, not punitive measures; but a man who, believing in Karma, still revenges himself, still refuses to forgive every injury, whereby he would render good for evil, is a criminal, and only hurts himself. As Karma is sure to punish the man who has wronged another, by seeking to inflict an additional punishment on one's enemy, and, instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law, adding to it one's own mite, we only beget thereby a cause for the future reward of our enemy and a future punishment for ourself. The unfailing "regulator" in each incarnation affects the quality of its successor, and the sum of the merit or demerit in preceding incarnations determines the following rebirth.

INQ.—*Are we, then, to infer a man's past from his present?*

THEO.—Only so far as to believe that his present life is what it justly should be, to atone for the sins of the past life. Of course—seers and great Adepts excepted—we cannot, as average mortals, know what those sins were. From our paucity of data it is impossible for us to determine even what an old man's youth must have been; neither can we, for like reasons, draw final conclusions, merely from what we see in the life of some man, as to what his past life may have been.

#### WHAT IS KARMA?

INQ.—*But what is Karma?*

THEO.—As I have said, we consider it as the *ultimate law* of the universe, the source, origin, and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical,



mental, and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, Karma is that unseen and unknown law which *adjusts wisely, intelligently, and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable, its action is perceivable.

INQ.—*Then it is the “absolute,” the “unknowable,” again, and is not of much value as an explanation of the problems of life.*

THEO.—On the contrary. For though we do not know what Karma is *per se* and in its essence, we *do* know *how* it works, and we can define and describe its mode of action with accuracy. We only do *not* know its ultimate *cause*, just as modern philosophy universally admits that the *ultimate* cause of a thing is “unknowable.”

INQ.—*And what has Theosophy to say in regard to the solution of the more practical needs of humanity? What is the explanation which it offers of the awful suffering and dire necessity prevalent among the so-called “lower classes”?*

THEO.—To be pointed: according to our teaching, all these great social evils—the distinction of classes in society, and of the sexes in the affairs of life, the unequal distribution of capital and of labor—all are due to what we tersely but truly denominate Karma.

INQ.—*But surely all these evils which seem to fall upon the masses somewhat indiscriminately are not actual merited and individual Karma?*

THEO.—No, they cannot be so strictly defined in their effects as to show that each individual environment, and the particular conditions of life in which each person finds himself, are nothing more than the retributive Karma which the individual has generated in a previous life. We must

not lose sight of the fact that every atom is subject to the general law governing the whole body to which it belongs, and here we come upon the wider track of the karmic law. Do you not perceive that the aggregate of individual Karma becomes that of the nation to which those individuals belong, and, further, that the sum total of national Karma is that of the world? The evils that you speak of are not peculiar to the individual or even to the nation; they are more or less universal; and it is upon this broad line of human interdependence that the law of Karma finds its legitimate and equable issue.

INQ.—*Do I, then, understand that the law of Karma is not necessarily an individual law?*

THEO.—That is just what I mean. It is impossible that Karma could readjust the balance of power in the world's life and progress unless it had a broad and general line of action. It is held as a truth among Theosophists that the interdependence of humanity is the cause of what is called distributive Karma, and it is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief. It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality there is no such thing as "separateness"; and the nearest approach to that selfish state which the laws of life permit is in the intent or motive.

INQ.—*And are there no means by which the distributive or national Karma might be concentrated or collected, so to speak, and brought to its natural and legitimate fulfilment without all this protracted suffering?*

THEO.—As a general rule, and within certain limits which define the age to which we belong, the law of Karma can-



not be hastened or retarded in its fulfilment. But of this I am certain: the point of possibility in either of these directions has never yet been touched. Listen to the following recital of one phase of national suffering, and then ask yourself whether, admitting the working power of individual, relative, and distributive Karma, these evils are not capable of extensive modification and general relief. What I am about to read to you is from the pen of a national savior—one who, having overcome *self*, and being free to choose, has elected to serve humanity, in bearing at least as much as a woman's shoulders can possibly bear of national Karma. This is what she says:

Yes. Nature always does speak, don't you think? Only sometimes we make so much noise that we drown her voice. That is why it is so restful to go out of the town and nestle awhile in the Mother's arms. I am thinking of the evening on Hampstead Heath when we watched the sun go down; but oh, upon what suffering and misery that sun had set! A lady brought me yesterday a big hamper of wild-flowers. I thought some of my East End family had a better right to it than I, and so I took it down to a very poor school in Whitechapel this morning. You should have seen the pallid little faces brighten! Thence I went to pay for some dinners at a little cook-shop for some children. It was in a back street, narrow, full of jostling people; stench indescribable, from fish, meat, and other comestibles, all reeking in a sun that, in Whitechapel, festers instead of purifying. The cook-shop was the quintessence of all the smells. Indescribable meat-pies at 1d., loathsome lumps of "food," and swarms of flies—a very altar of Beelzebub! All about, babies on the prowl for scraps, one, with the face of an angel, gathering up cherry-stones as a light and nutritious form of diet. I came westward with every nerve shuddering and jarred, wondering whether anything can be done with some parts of London save swallowing them up in an earthquake and starting their inhabitants afresh, after a plunge into some purifying Lethe, out of which not a memory might emerge! And then I thought of Hampstead Heath, and—pondered. If by any sacrifice one could win the power to save these people, the cost would not be worth counting; but, you see, *they* must be changed—and how can that be wrought? In the condition they now are, they would not profit by any environment in which they might be placed; and yet in their present sur-

roundings they must continue to putrefy. It breaks my heart, this endless, hopeless misery, and the brutish degradation that is at once its outgrowth and its root. It is like the banian-tree; every branch roots itself and sends out new shoots. What a difference between these feelings and the peaceful scene at Hampstead! And yet we who are the brothers and sisters of these poor creatures have only a right to use Hampstead Heaths to gain strength to save Whitechapels. [*Signed by a name too respected and too well known to be given to scoffers.*]

INQ.—*That is a sad but beautiful letter, and I think it presents with painful conspicuity the terrible workings of what you have called "relative" and "distributive" Karma. But alas! there seems no immediate hope of any relief short of an earthquake, or some such general engulfment.*

THEO.—What right have we to think so while one half of humanity is in a position to effect an immediate relief of the privations which are suffered by their fellows? When every individual has contributed to the general good what he can of money, of labor, and of ennobling thought, then, and only then, will the balance of national Karma be struck, and until then we have no right, nor any reasons, for saying that there is more life on the earth than Nature can support. It is reserved for the heroic souls, the saviors of our race and nation, to find out the cause of this unequal pressure of retributive Karma, and by a supreme effort to readjust the balance of power, and save the people from a moral engulfment a thousand times more disastrous and more permanently evil than the like physical catastrophe, in which you seem to see the only possible outlet for this accumulated misery.

INQ.—*Well, then, tell me generally how you describe this law of Karma.*

THEO.—We describe Karma as that law of readjustment which ever tends to restore disturbed equilibrium in the physical, and broken harmony in the moral world.

We say that Karma does not act in this or that particular way always, but that it always *does* act so as to restore harmony and preserve the balance of equilibrium, in virtue of which the universe exists.

INQ.—*Give me an illustration.*

THEO.—Later on I will give you a full illustration. Think now of a pond. A stone falls into the water and creates disturbing waves. These waves oscillate backward and forward till at last, owing to the operation of what physicists call the law of the dissipation of energy, they are brought to rest, and the water returns to its condition of calm tranquillity. Similarly *all* action, on every plane, produces disturbance in the balanced harmony of the universe, and the vibrations so produced will continue to roll backward and forward, if the area is limited, till equilibrium is restored. But since each such disturbance starts from some particular point, it is clear that equilibrium and harmony can only be restored by the reconverging *to that same point* of all the forces which were set in motion from it. And here you have proof that the consequences of a man's deeds, thoughts, etc., must all react upon *himself* with the same force with which they were set in motion.

INQ.—*But I see nothing of a moral character about this law. It looks to me like the simple physical law that action and reaction are equal and opposite.*

THEO.—I am not surprised to hear you say that. Europeans have got so much into the ingrained habit of considering right and wrong, good and evil, as matters of an arbitrary code of law laid down either by men or imposed upon them by a personal God. We Theosophists, however, say that "good" and "harmony," and "evil" and "disharmony," are synonymous. Further, we maintain that all pain and suffering are results of want of harmony, and that

the one terrible and only cause of the disturbance of harmony is *selfishness* in some form or other. Hence Karma gives back to every man the *actual consequences* of his own actions, without any regard to their moral character; but since he receives his due for *all*, it is obvious that he will be made to atone for all sufferings which he has caused, just as he will reap in joy and gladness the fruits of all the happiness and harmony he had helped to produce. I can do no better than quote for your benefit certain passages from books and articles written by those of our Theosophists who have a correct idea of Karma.

INQ.—*I wish you would, as your literature seems to be very sparing on this subject.*

THEO.—Because it is *the* most difficult of all our tenets. Some short time ago there appeared the following objection from a Christian pen:

Granting that the teaching in regard to Theosophy is correct, and that "man must be his own savior, must overcome self and conquer the evil that is in his dual nature, to obtain the emancipation of his soul"—what is man to do after he has been awakened and converted to a certain extent from evil or wickedness? How is he to get emancipation, or pardon, or the blotting out of the evil or wickedness he has already done?

To this Mr. J. H. Connelly replies very pertinently that no one can hope to "make the Theosophical engine run on the theological track." As he has it:

The possibility of shirking individual responsibility is not among the concepts of Theosophy. In this faith there is no such thing as pardoning, or "blotting out of evil or wickedness already done," otherwise than by the adequate punishment therefor of the wrong-doer and the restoration of the harmony in the universe that had been disturbed by his wrongful act. The evil has been his own, and while others must suffer its consequences, atonement can be made by nobody but himself.

The condition contemplated, . . . in which a man shall have been "awakened and converted to a certain extent from evil or wickedness," is that in which a man shall have realized that his deeds are

evil and deserving of punishment. In that realization a sense of personal responsibility is inevitable, and just in proportion to the extent of his awakening or "converting" must be the sense of that awful responsibility. While it is strong upon him is the time when he is urged to accept the doctrine of vicarious atonement.

He is told that he must also repent; but nothing is easier than that. It is an amiable weakness of human nature that we are quite prone to regret the evil we have done when our attention is called and we have either suffered from it ourselves or enjoyed its fruits. Possibly close analysis of the feeling would show us that that which we regret is rather the necessity that seemed to require the evil as a means of attainment of our selfish ends than the evil itself.

Attractive as this prospect of casting our burden of sins "at the foot of the cross" may be to the ordinary mind, it does not commend itself to the Theosophic student. He does not apprehend why the sinner by attaining knowledge of his evil can thereby merit any pardon for, or the blotting out of, his past wickedness; or why repentance and future right living entitle him to a suspension in his favor of the universal law of relation between cause and effect. The results of his evil deeds continue to exist; the suffering caused to others by his wickedness is not blotted out. The Theosophical student takes the result of wickedness upon the innocent into his problem. He considers not only the guilty person, but his victims.

Evil is an infraction of the laws of harmony governing the universe, and the penalty thereof must fall upon the violator of that law himself. Christ uttered the warning, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee," and St. Paul said, "Work out your own salvation;" "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." That, by the way, is a fine metaphoric rendering of the sentence of the Purânas, far antedating him—that "every man reaps the consequences of his own acts."

This is the principle of the law of Karma which is taught by Theosophy. Sinnett, in his *Esoteric Buddhism*, rendered Karma as "the law of ethical causation." "The law of retribution," as Madame Blavatsky translates its meaning, is better. It is the power which,

Just, though mysterious, leads us on unerring,  
Through ways unmarked, from guilt to punishment.

But it is more. It rewards merit as unerringly and amply as it punishes demerit. It is the outcome of every act, of thought, word, and deed, and by it men mold themselves, their lives and happenings.



Eastern philosophy rejects the idea of a newly created soul for every baby born. It believes in a limited number of monads, evolving and growing more and more perfect through their assimilation of many successive personalities. Those personalities are the product of Karma, and it is by Karma and reincarnation that the human monad in time returns to its source—absolute deity.

E. D. Walker, in his *Reincarnation*, offers the following explanation :

Briefly, the doctrine of Karma is that we have made ourselves what we are by former actions, and are building our future eternity by present actions. There is no destiny but what we ourselves determine. There is no salvation or condemnation except what we ourselves bring about. . . . Because it offers no shelter for culpable actions and necessitates a sterling manliness, it is less welcome to weak natures than the easy religious tenets of vicarious atonement, intercession, forgiveness, and death-bed conversions. . . . In the domain of eternal justice the offense and the punishment are inseparably connected as the same event, because there is no real distinction between the action and its outcome. . . . It is Karma, or our old acts, that draws us back into earthly life. The spirit's abode changes according to its Karma, and this Karma forbids any long continuance in one condition, because *it* is always changing. So long as action is governed by material and selfish motives, just so long must the effect of that action be manifested in physical rebirths. Only the perfectly selfless man can elude the gravitation of material life. Few have attained this, but it is the goal of mankind.

And then the writer quotes from *The Secret Doctrine* :

Those who believe in Karma have to believe in destiny, which, from birth to death, every man is weaving, thread by thread, around himself, as a spider does his cobweb ; and this destiny is guided either by the heavenly voice of the invisible prototype outside of us, or by our more intimate astral or inner man, who is but too often the evil genius of the embodied entity called man. Both these lead on the outward man, but one of them must prevail ; and from the very beginning of the invisible affray the stern and implacable law of compensation steps in and takes its course, faithfully following the fluctuations. When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly inwrapped in the network of his own doing, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this self-made destiny. . . .



An Occultist or a philosopher will not speak of the goodness or cruelty of Providence; but, identifying it with Karma-Nemesis, he will teach that, nevertheless, it guards the good and watches over them in this as in future lives; and that it punishes the evil-doer—aye, even to his seventh rebirth—so long, in short, as the effect of his having thrown into perturbation even the smallest atom in the infinite world of harmony has not been finally readjusted. For the only decree of Karma—an eternal and immutable decree—is absolute harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through, and along with Nature, abiding by the laws on which that harmony depends, or—break them.

Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways—which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate; while another sees in them the action of blind fatalism; and a third, simple chance, with neither gods nor devils to guide them—would surely disappear if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. . . .

We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making and the riddles of life that we will not solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident of our lives, not a misshapen day or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life. . . .

The law of Karma is inextricably interwoven with that of reincarnation. . . . It is only this doctrine that can explain to us the mysterious problem of good and evil, and reconcile man to the terrible and apparent injustice of life. Nothing but such certainty can quiet our revolted sense of justice. For, when one unacquainted with the noble doctrine looks around him and observes the inequalities of birth and fortune, of intellect and capacities; when one sees honor paid to fools and profligates on whom fortune has heaped her favors by mere privilege of birth, and their nearest neighbor, with all his intellect and noble virtues—far more deserving in every way—perishing for want and for lack of sympathy; when one sees all this and has to turn away, helpless to relieve the undeserved suffering, one's ears ringing and heart aching with the cries of pain around him, that blessed knowledge of Karma alone prevents him from cursing life and men as well as their supposed creator. . . .

This law, whether conscious or unconscious, predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in eternity truly, for it is eternity

itself; and as such, since no act can be coequal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it is action itself. It is not the wave which drowns the man, but the personal action of the wretch who goes deliberately and places himself under the impersonal action of the laws that govern the ocean's motion. Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plants and creates causes, and karmic law adjusts the effects, which adjustment is not an act, but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigor. If it happen to dislocate the arm that tried to bend it out of its natural position, shall we say it is the bough which broke our arm, or that our own folly has brought us to grief? Karma has never sought to destroy intellectual and individual liberty, like the God invented by the monotheists. It has not involved its decrees in darkness purposely to perplex man, nor shall it punish him who dares to scrutinize its mysteries. On the contrary, he who through study and meditation unveils its intricate paths, and throws light on those dark ways, in the windings of which so many men perish, owing to their ignorance of the labyrinth of life, is working for the good of his fellow-men. Karma is an absolute and eternal law in the world of manifestation; and as there can be only one Absolute, as one eternal, ever-present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as atheists or materialists, still less as fatalists; for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it is an aspect, in its effects in the phenomenal world.

Another able Theosophic writer, Mrs. P. Sinnett, in her *Purpose of Theosophy*, says:

Every individual is making Karma either good or bad in each action and thought of his daily round, and is at the same time working out in this life the Karma brought about by the acts and desires of the last. When we see people afflicted by congenital ailments it may be safely assumed that these ailments are the inevitable results of causes started by themselves in a previous birth. It may be argued that, as these afflictions are hereditary, they can have nothing to do with a past incarnation; but it must be remembered that the Ego, the real man, the individuality, has no spiritual origin in the parentage by which it is reëmbodied, but it is drawn, by the affinities which its previous mode of life attracted round it, into the current that carries it, when the time comes for rebirth, to the home best fitted for the development of those tendencies. . . . This doctrine of Karma, when properly understood, is well calculated to guide and assist those who realize its truth to a

higher and better mode of life; for it must not be forgotten that not only our actions, but our thoughts also, are most assuredly followed by a crowd of circumstances that will influence for good or for evil our own future, and, what is still more important, the future of many of our fellow-creatures. If sins of omission and commission could in any case be only self-regarding, the effect on the sinner's Karma would be a matter of minor consequence. The effect that every thought and act through life carries with it for good or evil a corresponding influence on other members of the human family renders a strict sense of justice, morality, and unselfishness so necessary to future happiness or progress. A crime once committed, an evil thought sent out from the mind, are past recall—no amount of repentance can wipe out their results in the future. Repentance, if sincere, will deter a man from repeating errors; it cannot save him or others from the effects of those already produced, which will most unerringly overtake him either in this life or in the next rebirth:

Mr. J. H. Connelly proceeds:

The believers in a religion based upon such doctrine are willing it should be compared with one in which man's destiny for eternity is determined by the accidents of a single, brief, earthly existence, during which he is cheered by the promise that "as the tree falls, so shall it lie"; in which his brightest hope, when he wakes up to a knowledge of his wickedness, is the doctrine of vicarious atonement; and in which even that is handicapped, according to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith:

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

"These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. . . . As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, . . . neither are any other redeemed by Christ effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

"The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."

This is what the able defender says. Nor can we do any better than wind up the subject as he does, by a quotation from a magnificent poem. As he says:

The exquisite beauty of Edwin Arnold's exposition of Karma in *The Light of Asia* tempts to its reproduction here, but it is too long for quotation in full. Here is a portion of it:

Karma—all that total of a soul  
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,  
The "self" it wove with woof of viewless time  
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts.

\* \* \* \* \*

Before beginning and without an end,  
As space eternal and as surety sure,  
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,  
Only its laws endure.

It will not be contemned of any one;  
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains;  
The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,  
The hidden ill with pains.

It seeth everywhere and marketh all;  
Do right—it recompenseth! Do one wrong—  
The equal retribution must be made,  
Though Dharma tarry long.

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true,  
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;  
Times are as naught—to-morrow it will judge—  
Or after many days.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such is the law which moves to righteousness,  
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;  
The heart of it is love, the end of it  
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey.

And now I advise you to compare our Theosophic views upon Karma, the law of retribution, and say whether they are not both more philosophical and just than this cruel and idiotic dogma which makes of "God" a senseless fiend—

the tenet, namely, that the "elect only" will be saved, and the rest doomed to eternal perdition !

INQ.—*Yes, I see what you mean generally ; but I wish you could give some concrete example of the action of Karma.*

THEO.—That I cannot do. We can only feel sure, as I said before, that our present lives and circumstances are the direct results of our own deeds and thoughts in lives that are past. But we, who are not seers or Initiates, cannot know anything about the details of the working of the law of Karma.

INQ.—*Can any one, even an Adept or seer, follow out this karmic process of readjustment in detail ?*

THEO.—Certainly ; "those who know" can do so by the exercise of powers which are latent even in all men.

#### WHO ARE THOSE WHO KNOW?

INQ.—*Does this hold equally of ourselves as of others ?*

THEO.—Equally. As just said, the same limited vision exists for all, save for those who have reached, in the present incarnation, the acme of spiritual vision and clairvoyance. We can only perceive that, if things ought to have been different with us, they would have been different ; that we are what we have made ourselves, and have only what we have earned for ourselves.

INQ.—*I am afraid such a conception would only embitter us.*

THEO.—I believe it is precisely the reverse. It is disbelief in the just law of retribution that is more likely to awaken every combative feeling in man. A child, as much as a man, resents a punishment, or even a reproof, he believes to be unmerited, far more than he does a severer punishment, if he feels that it is merited. Belief in Karma

is the highest motive for reconciliation to one's lot in this life, and the very strongest incentive toward effort to better the succeeding rebirth. Both of these, indeed, would be destroyed if we supposed that our lot was the result of anything but strict *law*, or that destiny was in any other hands than our own.

INQ.—*You have just asserted that this system of reincarnation under karmic law commended itself to reason, justice, and the moral sense. But, if so, is it not at some sacrifice of the gentler qualities of sympathy and pity, and thus a hardening of the finer instincts of human nature?*

THEO.—Only apparently, not really. No man can receive more or less than his deserts without a corresponding injustice or partiality to others; and a law which could be averted through compassion would bring about more misery than it saved, more irritation and curses than thanks. Remember, also, that we do not administer the *law*, if we do create causes for its effects; it administers itself; and again, that the most copious provision for the manifestation of *just* compassion and mercy is shown in the state of Devachan.

INQ.—*You speak of Adepts as being an exception to the rule of our general ignorance. Do they really know more than we do of reincarnation and after-states?*

THEO.—They do indeed. By the training of faculties we all possess, but which they alone have developed to perfection, they have entered in spirit these various planes and states we have been discussing. For long ages one generation of Adepts after another has studied the mysteries of being, of life, death, and rebirth, and all have taught in their turn some of the facts so learned.

INQ.—*And is the production of Adepts the aim of Theosophy?*



THEO.—Theosophy considers humanity as an emanation from divinity on its return-path thereto. At an advanced point upon the path adeptship is reached by those who have devoted several incarnations to its achievement. For, remember well, no man has ever reached adeptship in the secret sciences in one life; but many incarnations are necessary for it after the formation of a conscious purpose and the beginning of the needful training. Many may be the men and women in the very midst of our Society who have begun this uphill work toward illumination several incarnations ago, and who yet, owing to the personal illusions of the present life, are either ignorant of the fact, or on the road to losing every chance, in this existence, of progressing any farther. They feel an irresistible attraction toward Occultism and the "higher life," and yet are too personal and self-opinionated, too much in love with the deceptive allurements of mundane life and the world's ephemeral pleasures, to give them up, and so lose their chance in their present birth. But, for ordinary men, for the practical duties of daily life, such a far-off result is inappropriate as an aim and quite ineffective as a motive.

INQ.—*What, then, may be their object or distinct purpose in joining the Theosophical Society?*

THEO.—Many are interested in our doctrines, and feel instinctively that they are truer than those of any dogmatic religion. Others have formed a fixed resolve to attain the highest ideal of man's duty.

#### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE, OR BLIND AND REASONED FAITH.

INQ.—*You say that they accept and believe in the doctrines of Theosophy. But as they do not belong to those Adepts you have just mentioned, then they must accept your teachings on*

*"blind faith." In what does this differ from that of conventional religions?*

THEO.—As it differs on almost all the other points, so it differs on this one. What you call "faith," and that which is "blind faith," in reality, with regard to the dogmas of the Christian religions, becomes with us *knowledge*, the logical sequence of things we *know*, about *facts* in Nature. Your doctrines are based upon interpretation, therefore upon the *second-hand* testimony of seers; ours upon the unvarying and invariable testimony of seers. The ordinary Christian theology, for instance, holds that man is a creature of God, of three component parts—body, soul, and spirit—all essential to his integrity, and all, either in the gross form of physical earthly existence or in the etherealized form of post-resurrection experience, needed to so constitute him forever, each man having thus a permanent existence separate from other men and from the divine. Theosophy, on the other hand, holds that, man being an emanation from the unknown yet ever-present and infinite Divine Essence, his body and everything else is impermanent, hence an illusion; spirit alone in him being the one enduring substance, and even that losing its separated individuality at the moment of its complete reunion with the Universal Spirit.

INQ.—*If we lose even our individuality, then it becomes simply annihilation.*

THEO.—I say it does not, since I speak of *separate*, not of universal individuality. This individuality becomes as a part transformed into the whole; the "dewdrop" is not evaporated, but becomes the sea. Is physical man annihilated when from a fetus he becomes an old man? What kind of satanic pride must be ours if we place our infinitesimally small consciousness and individuality higher than the universal and infinite consciousness!

INQ.—*It follows, then, that there is, de facto, no man, but all is spirit?*

THEO.—You are mistaken. It follows that the union of spirit with matter is but temporary; or, to put it more clearly, since spirit and matter are one, being the two opposite poles of the universal manifested substance, spirit loses its right to the name so long as the smallest particle and atom of its manifesting substance still clings to any form, the result of differentiation. To believe otherwise is "blind faith."

INQ.—*Thus it is on knowledge, not on faith, that you assert that the permanent principle, the spirit, simply makes a transit through matter?*

THEO.—I would put it otherwise and say: We assert that the appearance of the permanent and *one* principle—spirit—as *matter* is transient, and therefore no better than an illusion.

INQ.—*Very well; and this given out on knowledge, not faith?*

THEO.—Just so. But as I see very well what you are driving at, I may just as well tell you that we hold faith such as you advocate to be a mental disease, and real faith—i.e., the *pistis* of the Greeks—as "belief based on knowledge," whether supplied by the evidence of physical or spiritual senses.

INQ.—*What do you mean?*

THEO.—If it is the difference between the two that you want to know, I mean that between *faith on authority* and *faith on one's spiritual intuition* there is a very great difference.

INQ.—*What is it?*

THEO.—One is human credulity and superstition, the other human belief and intuition. As Professor Alexan-

der Wilder says in his Introduction to the *Eleusinian Mysteries* :

It is ignorance which leads to profanation. Men ridicule what they do not properly understand. . . . The undercurrent of this world is set toward one goal; and inside of human credulity . . . is a power almost infinite, a holy faith capable of apprehending the supremest truths of all existence.

Those who limit that "credulity" to human authoritative dogmas alone will never fathom that power, nor even perceive it in their natures. It is stuck fast to the external plane, and is unable to bring forth into play the essence that rules it; for to do this they have to claim their right of private judgment, and this they never *dare* to do.

INQ.—*And is it this "intuition" which forces you to reject God as a personal Father, ruler, and governor of the universe?*

THEO.—Precisely. We believe in an ever-unknowable Principle; for only blind aberration can make one maintain that the universe, thinking man, and all the marvels contained even in the world of matter, could have grown without some *intelligent powers* to bring about the extraordinarily wise arrangement of all its parts. Nature may err, and often does, in its details and the external manifestations of its materials, never in its inner causes and results. Ancient pagans held far more philosophical views on this question than modern philosophers, whether agnostics, materialists, or Christians; and no pagan writer has ever yet advanced the proposition that cruelty and mercy are not finite feelings, and can therefore be made the attributes of an *infinite* God. Their gods, therefore, were all finite. The Siamese author of the *Wheel of the Law* expresses the same idea about your personal God as ourselves; he says (p. 25):

A Buddhist might believe in the existence of a God sublime above all human qualities and attributes—a perfect God, above love and

hatred and jealousy, calmly resting in a quietude that nothing could disturb; and of such a God he would speak no disparagement, not from a desire to please him or fear to offend him, but from natural veneration. But he cannot understand a God with the attributes and qualities of men; a God who loves and hates and shows anger; a Deity who, whether described as by Christian missionaries or by Mahometans or Brahmins \* or Jews, falls below his standard of even an ordinary good man.

INQ.—*Faith for faith, is not the faith of the Christian who believes, in his human helplessness and humility, that there is a merciful Father in heaven who will protect him from temptation, help him in life, and forgive him his transgressions, better than the cold and proud, almost fatalistic, faith of the Buddhists, Vedântins, and Theosophists?*

THEO.—Persist in calling our belief “faith” if you will. But once we are again on this ever-recurring question, I ask in my turn: Faith for faith, is not the one based on strict logic and reason better than the one which is based simply on human authority or—hero-worship? Our “faith” has all the logical force of the arithmetical truism that two and two will produce four. Your faith is like the logic of some emotional women, of whom Tourgenyeff said that for them two and two were generally five, and a tallow candle into the bargain. Yours is a faith, moreover, which clashes not only with every conceivable view of justice and logic, but which, if analyzed, leads man to his moral perdition, checks the progress of mankind, and positively making of might right, transforms every second man into a Cain to his brother Abel.

#### HAS GOD THE RIGHT TO FORGIVE?

INQ.—*To what do you allude?*

THEO.—To the doctrine of “atonement.” I allude to that dangerous dogma in which you believe, and which teaches

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\* Sectarian Brâhmans are here meant. The Parabrahman of the Vedântins is the Deity we accept and believe in.



us that no matter how enormous our crimes against the laws of God and of man, we have but to believe in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of mankind, and his blood will wash out every stain. It is now twenty years that I have preached against it, and I may now draw your attention to a paragraph from *Isis Unveiled*, written in 1875. This is what Christianity teaches, and what we combat:

God's mercy is boundless and unfathomable. It is impossible to conceive of a human sin so damnable that the price paid in advance for the redemption of the sinner would not wipe it out if a thousandfold worse. And, furthermore, it is never too late to repent. Though the offender wait until the last minute of the last hour of the last day of his mortal life before his blanched lips utter the confession of faith, he may go to Paradise; the dying thief did so, and so may all others as vile. These are the assumptions of the church and of the clergy; assumptions banged at the heads of your countrymen by England's favorite preachers, right in the "light of the nineteenth century"—this most paradoxical age of all!

Now, to what does it lead?

INQ.—*Does it not make the Christian happier than the Buddhist or Brâhman?*

THEO.—No; not the educated man, at any rate, since the majority of these have long since virtually lost all belief in this cruel dogma. But it leads those who still believe in it more easily *to the threshold of every conceivable crime* than any other I know of. Let me quote to you from *Isis Unveiled* once more (ii., 542, 543):

If we step outside the little circle of creed and consider the universe as a whole balanced by the exquisite adjustment of parts, how all sound logic, how the faintest glimmering sense of justice, revolts against this vicarious atonement! If the criminal sinned only against himself, and wronged no one but himself; if by sincere repentance he could cause the obliteration of past events, not only from the memory of man, but also from that imperishable record which no deity—not even the Supremest of the Supreme—can cause to disappear, then this dogma might not be incomprehensible. But to maintain that one may



wrong his fellow-man, kill, disturb the equilibrium of society and the natural order of things, and then—through cowardice, hope, or compulsion matters not—he forgiven by believing that the spilling of one blood washes out the other blood spilled—this is preposterous! Can the *results* of a crime be obliterated even though the crime itself should be pardoned? The effects of a cause are never limited to the boundaries of the cause, nor can the results of crime be confined to the offender and his victim. Every good as well as evil action has its effects, as palpably as the stone flung into calm water. The simile is trite, but it is the best ever conceived, so let us use it. The eddying circles are greater and swifter as the disturbing object is greater or smaller; but the smallest pebble—nay, the tiniest speck—makes its ripples. And this disturbance is not alone visible and on the surface. Below, unseen, in every direction—outward and downward—drop pushes drop until the sides and bottom are touched by the force. More, the air above the water is agitated, and this disturbance passes, as the physicists tell us, from stratum to stratum out into space for ever and ever; an impulse has been given to matter, and that is never lost, can never be recalled! . . .

So with crime and so with its opposite. The action may be instantaneous, the effects are eternal. When, after the stone is once flung into the pond, we can recall it to the hand, roll back the ripples, obliterate the force expended, restore the etheric waves to their previous state of non-being, and wipe out every trace of the act of throwing the missile, so that Time's record shall not show that it ever happened, then, *then* we may patiently hear Christians argue for the efficacy of this atonement

and—cease to believe in karmic law. As it now stands, we call upon the whole world to decide which of our two doctrines is the most appreciative of deific justice, and which is more reasonable, even on simple human evidence and logic.

INQ.—*Yet millions believe in the Christian dogma and are happy.*

THEO.—Pure sentimentalism overpowering their thinking faculties, which no true philanthropist or altruist will ever accept. It is not even a dream of selfishness, but a nightmare of the human intellect. Look where it leads to, and

tell me the name of that pagan country where crimes are more easily committed or more numerous than in Christian lands. Look at the long and ghastly annual records of crimes committed in European countries ; and behold Protestant and biblical America. There *conversions* effected in prisons are more numerous than those made by public *revivals* and preaching.

See how the ledger-balance of Christian justice (!) stands. Red-handed murderers, urged on by the demons of lust, revenge, cupidity, fanaticism, or mere brutal thirst for blood, who kill their victims, in most cases, without giving them time to repent or call on Jesus. These, perhaps, died sinful, and, of course—consistently with theological logic—met the reward of their greater or lesser offenses. But the murderer, overtaken by human justice, is imprisoned, wept over by sentimentalists, prayed with and at, pronounces the charmed words of conversion, and goes to the scaffold a redeemed child of Jesus! Except for the murder he would not have been prayed with, redeemed, pardoned. Clearly this man did well to murder, for thus he gained eternal happiness! And how about the victim, and his or her family, relatives, dependents, social relations ; has justice no recompense for them? Must they suffer in this world and the next, while he who wronged them sits beside the “ holy thief ” of Calvary and is forever blessed? On this question the clergy keep a prudent silence.\*

And now you know why Theosophists—whose fundamental belief and hope is justice for all, in heaven as on earth, and in Karma—reject this dogma.

INQ.—*The ultimate destiny of man, then, is not a heaven presided over by God, but the gradual transformation of matter into its primordial element, spirit ?*

THEO.—It is to that final goal to which all tends in Nature.

INQ.—*Do not some of you regard this association or “fall of spirit into matter” as evil, and rebirth as a sorrow ?*

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\* *Isis Unveiled, ibid.*

THEO.—Some do, and therefore strive to shorten their period of probation on earth. It is not, however, an unmixed evil, since it insures the experience upon which we mount to knowledge and wisdom. I mean that experience which *teaches* that the needs of our spiritual nature can never be met by other than spiritual happiness. As long as we are in the body we are subjected to pain, suffering, and all the disappointing incidents occurring during life. Therefore, and to palliate this, we finally acquire knowledge which alone can afford us relief and hope of a better future.

## KARMA IN PRACTICAL LIFE

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### DUTY.

INQ.—*Why, then, the need for rebirths, since all alike fail to secure a permanent peace ?*

THEO.—Because the final goal cannot be reached in any way but through life-experiences, and because the bulk of these consists in pain and suffering. It is only through the latter that we can learn. Joys and pleasures teach us nothing ; they are evanescent, and can only in the long run bring satiety. Moreover, our constant failure to find any permanent satisfaction in life which would meet the wants of our higher nature shows us plainly that those wants can be met only on their own plane—to wit, the spiritual.

INQ.—*Is the natural result of this a desire to quit life by one means or another ?*

THEO.—If you mean by such desire “suicide,” then I say, most decidedly not. Such a result can never be a “natural” one, but is ever due to a morbid brain-disease, or to most decided and strong materialistic views. It is the worst of crimes, and dire in its results. But if by desire you mean simply aspiration to reach spiritual existence, and not a wish to quit the earth, then I would call it a very

natural desire indeed. Otherwise voluntary death would be an abandonment of our present post and of the duties incumbent on us, as well as an attempt to shirk karmic responsibilities, and thus involve the creation of new Karma.

INQ.—*But if actions on the material plane are unsatisfying, why should duties, which are such actions, be imperative?*

THEO.—First of all, because our philosophy teaches us that the object of doing our duties to all men first and to ourselves last is not the attainment of personal happiness, but of the happiness of others; the fulfilment of right for the sake of right, not for what it may bring us. Happiness, or rather contentment, may indeed follow the performance of duty, but is not and must not be the motive for it.

INQ.—*What do you understand precisely by "duty" in Theosophy? It cannot be the Christian duties preached by Jesus and his apostles, since you recognize neither.*

THEO.—You are once more mistaken. What you call "Christian" duties were inculcated by every great moral and religious reformer ages before the Christian era. All that was great, generous, heroic, was, in days of old, not only talked about and preached from pulpits as in our own time, but *acted upon*, sometimes by whole nations. The history of the Buddhist reform is full of the most noble and most heroically unselfish acts. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing," was practically carried out by the followers of Buddha several centuries before Peter. The ethics of Christianity are grand, no doubt; but, as undoubtedly, they are not new, and have originated as "pagan" duties.

INQ.—*And how would you define these duties, or "duty" in general, as you understand the term?*



THEO.—Duty is that which is *due* to humanity—to our fellow-men, neighbors, family—and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation. Theosophy is the quintessence of duty.

INQ.—*So is Christianity when rightly understood and carried out.*

THEO.—No doubt it is; but then, were it not a *lip-religion* in practice, Theosophy would have little to do amid Christians. Unfortunately it is but such lip-ethics. Those who practise their duty toward all, and for duty's own sake, are few; and fewer still are those who perform that duty, remaining content with the satisfaction of their own secret consciousness. It is

The public voice  
Of praise, that honors virtue and rewards it,

which is ever uppermost in the minds of the “world-renowned” philanthropists. Modern ethics are beautiful to read about and hear discussed; but what are words unless converted into actions? Finally, if you ask me how we understand Theosophical duty practically and in view of Karma, I may answer you that our duty is to drink to the last drop, without a murmur, whatever contents the cup of life may have in store for us, to pluck the roses of life only for the fragrance they may shed on others, and to be ourselves content but with the thorns, if that fragrance cannot be enjoyed without depriving some one else of it.

INQ.—*All this is very vague. What do you do more than Christians do?*

THEO.—It is not what we members of the Theosophical Society do—though some of us try our best—but how

much farther Theosophy leads to good than modern Christianity does. I say *action*—enforced action—instead of mere intention and talk. A man may be what he likes—the most worldly, selfish, and hard-hearted of men, even a deep-dyed rascal—and it will not prevent him from calling himself a Christian, or others from so regarding him. But no Theosophist has the right to this name unless he is thoroughly imbued with the correctness of Carlyle's truism, "The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest," and unless he sets and models his daily life upon this truth. The profession of a truth is not yet the enactment of it; and the more beautiful and grand it sounds, the more loudly virtue or duty is talked about instead of being acted upon, the more forcibly it will always remind one of the Dead Sea fruit. *Cant* is the most loathsome of all vices, and cant is the most prominent feature of the greatest Protestant country of this century—England.

INQ.—*What do you consider as due to humanity at large?*

THEO.—Full recognition of equal rights and privileges for all, without distinction of race, color, social position, or birth.

INQ.—*When would you consider such due not given?*

THEO.—When there is the slightest invasion of another's right, be that other a man or a nation; when there is any failure to show him the same justice, kindness, consideration, or mercy which we desire for ourselves. The whole present system of politics is built on the oblivion of such rights and the most fierce assertion of national selfishness. The French say, "Like master, like man;" they ought to add, "Like national policy, like citizen."

INQ.—*Do you take any part in politics?*

THEO.—As a society we carefully avoid them, for the reasons given below. To seek to achieve political reforms be-

fore we have effected a reform in human nature is like putting new wine into old bottles. Make men feel and recognize in their innermost hearts what is their real, true duty to all men, and every old abuse of power, every iniquitous law in the national policy based on human, social, or political selfishness, will disappear of itself. Foolish is the gardener who tries to weed his flower-bed of poisonous plants by cutting them off from the surface of the soil, instead of tearing them out by the roots. No lasting political reform can be ever achieved with the same selfish men at the head of affairs as of old.

*THE RELATIONS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY  
TO POLITICAL REFORMS.*

INQ.—*The Theosophical Society is not, then, a political organization ?*

THEO.—Certainly not. It is international in the highest sense, in that its members comprise men and women of all races, creeds, and forms of thought, who work together for one object—the improvement of humanity ; but as a society it takes absolutely no part in any national or party politics.

INQ.—*Why is this ?*

THEO.—For the very reasons I have mentioned. Moreover, political action must necessarily vary with the circumstances of the time and with the idiosyncrasies of individuals. While, from the very nature of their position as Theosophists, the members of the Theosophical Society are agreed on the principles of Theosophy, or they would not belong to the Society at all, it does not thereby follow that they agree on every other subject. As a society they can only act together in matters which are common to all—that is, in Theosophy itself ; as individuals, each is left perfectly free to follow out his or her particular line of

political thought and action, so long as this does not conflict with Theosophical principles or hurt the Theosophical Society.

INQ.—*But surely the Theosophical Society does not stand altogether aloof from the social questions which are now so fast coming to the front ?*

THEO.—The very principles of the Theosophical Society are a proof that it does not—or, rather, that most of its members do not—so stand aloof. If humanity can only be developed mentally and spiritually by the enforcement, first of all, of the soundest and most scientific physiological laws, it is the bounden duty of all who strive for this development to do their utmost to see that those laws shall be generally carried out. All Theosophists are only too sadly aware that, in Occidental countries especially, the social condition of large masses of the people renders it impossible for either their bodies or their spirits to be properly trained, so that the development of both is thereby arrested. As this training and development is one of the express objects of Theosophy, the Theosophical Society is in thorough sympathy and harmony with all true efforts in this direction.

INQ.—*But what do you mean by "true efforts" ? Each social reformer has his own panacea, and each believes his to be the one and only thing which can improve and save humanity.*

THEO.—Perfectly true ; and this is the real reason why so little satisfactory social work is accomplished. In most of these panaceas there is no really guiding principle, and there is certainly no one principle which connects them all. Valuable time and energy are thus wasted ; for men, instead of coöperating, strive one against the other, often, it is to be feared, for the sake of fame and reward rather than for

the great cause which they profess to have at heart, and which should be supreme in their lives.

INQ.—*How, then, should Theosophical principles be applied so that social coöperation may be promoted and true efforts for social amelioration be carried on?*

THEO.—Let me briefly remind you what these principles are: Universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma; Reincarnation. These are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one Universal Brotherhood.

INQ.—*How?*

THEO.—In the present state of society, especially in so-called civilized countries, we are continually brought face to face with the fact that large numbers of people are suffering from misery, poverty, and disease. Their physical condition is wretched, and their mental and spiritual faculties are often almost dormant. On the other hand, many persons at the opposite end of the social scale are leading lives of careless indifference, material luxury, and selfish indulgence. Neither of these forms of existence is mere chance. Both are the effects of the conditions which surround those who are subject to them, and the neglect of social duty on the one side is most closely connected with the stunted and arrested development on the other. In sociology, as in all branches of true science, the law of universal causation holds good. But this causation necessarily implies, as its logical outcome, that human solidarity on which Theosophy so strongly insists. If the action of one reacts on the lives of all—and this is the true scientific idea—then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity which lies at the root of the elevation of the race can ever



be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each, which is one of the fundamental Theosophical principles that every Theosophist should be bound not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life.

INQ.—*All this is very well as a general principle, but how would you apply it in a concrete way?*

THEO.—Look for a moment at what you would call the concrete facts of human society. Contrast the lives not only of the masses of the people, but of many of those who are called the middle and upper classes, with what they might be under healthier and nobler conditions, where justice, kindness, and love were paramount, instead of the selfishness, indifference, and brutality which now too often seem to reign supreme. All good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character, and this character is, and has been, conditioned by the endless chain of cause and effect. But this conditioning applies to the future as well as to the present and the past. Selfishness, indifference, and brutality can never be the normal state of the race; to believe so would be to despair of humanity, and that no Theosophist can do. Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities. Now, true evolution teaches us that by altering the surroundings of the organism we can alter and improve the organism; and in the strictest sense this is true with regard to man. Every Theosophist, therefore, is bound to do his utmost to help on, by all the means in his power, every wise and well-considered social effort which has for its object the amelioration of the condition of the poor. Such efforts should be made with a view to their ultimate social emancipation, or the development of the sense of duty in those who now so often neglect it in nearly every relation of life.

INQ.—*Agreed. But who is to decide whether social efforts are wise or unwise ?*

THEO.—No one person and no society can lay down a hard-and-fast rule in this respect. Much must necessarily be left to the individual judgment. One general test may, however, be given: Will the proposed action tend to promote that true brotherhood which it is the aim of Theosophy to bring about ? No real Theosophist will have much difficulty in applying such a test ; once he is satisfied of this, his duty will lie in the direction of forming public opinion. And this can be attained only by inculcating those higher and nobler conceptions of public and private duties which lie at the root of all spiritual and material improvement. In every conceivable case he himself must be a center of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow-men.

INQ.—*But why should he do this ? Are not he and all, as you teach, conditioned by their Karma, and must not Karma necessarily work itself out on certain lines ?*

THEO.—It is this very law of Karma which gives strength to all that I have said. The individual cannot separate himself from the race, nor the race from the individual. The law of Karma applies equally to all, although all are not equally developed. In helping on the development of others the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfil their Karma, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own. It is the development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself, but all, in their progressive march. By his actions he can make it either more difficult or more easy for humanity to attain the next higher plane of being.

INQ.—*How does this bear on the fourth of the principles you mentioned, viz., reincarnation ?*

THEO.—The connection is most intimate. If our present lives depend upon the development of certain principles which are a growth from the germs left by a previous existence, the law holds good as regards the future. Once grasp the idea that universal causation is not merely present, but past, present, and future, and every action on our present plane falls naturally and easily into its true place, and is seen in its true relation to ourselves and to others. Every mean and selfish action sends us backward and not forward, while every noble thought and every unselfish deed are stepping-stones to the higher and more glorious planes of being. If this life were all, then in many respects it would indeed be poor and mean ; but regarded as a preparation for the next sphere of existence, it may be used as the golden gate through which we may pass—not selfishly and alone, but in company with our fellows—to the palaces which lie beyond.

#### ON SELF-SACRIFICE.

INQ.—*Is equal justice to all and love to every creature the highest standard of Theosophy ?*

THEO.—No ; there is an even far higher one.

INQ.—*What can it be ?*

THEO.—The giving to others *more* than to one's self—*self-sacrifice*. Such was the standard and abounding measure which marked so preëminently the greatest teachers and masters of humanity—such as Gautama Buddha in history, and Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels. This trait alone was enough to secure them the perpetual reverence and gratitude of the generations of men that came after them. We say, however, that self-sacrifice has to be performed with

discrimination ; and such a self-abandonment, if made without justice, or blindly, regardless of subsequent results, may often prove not only to have been made in vain, but even to be harmful. One of the fundamental rules of Theosophy is justice to one's self—viewed as a unit of collective humanity, not as a personal self—justice, not more, but not less, than to others ; unless, indeed, by the sacrifice of the one Self we can benefit the many.

INQ.—*Could you make your idea clearer by giving an instance ?*

THEO.—There are many instances to illustrate it in history. Self-sacrifice for the practical good of many or several people Theosophy holds far higher than self-abnegation for a sectarian idea, such as that of "saving the heathen from damnation," for instance. In our opinion, Father Damien, the young man of thirty who offered his whole life in sacrifice for the benefit and alleviation of the sufferings of the lepers at Molokai ; who, after living for eighteen years alone with them, finally caught the loathsome disease and died, has not died in vain. He has given relief and relative happiness to thousands of miserable wretches. He has brought to them consolation, mental and physical. He threw a streak of light into the black and dreary night of an existence the hopelessness of which is unparalleled in the records of human suffering. He was a true Theosophist, and his memory will live forever in our annals. In our sight this poor Belgian priest stands immeasurably higher than, for instance, all those sincere but vainglorious fools, the missionaries who have sacrificed their lives in the South Sea Islands or China. What good have they done ? They went in one case to those who were not yet ripe for any truth ; and in the other to a nation whose systems of religious philosophy are as grand as any, if only the men who have them would live up to the standard of their Confucius

and other sages. They died victims of irresponsible cannibals and savages, and of popular fanaticism and hatred; whereas, by going to the slums of Whitechapel, or some other such locality of those that stagnate right under the blazing sun of our civilization, full of Christian savages and mental leprosy, they might have done real good, and preserved their lives for a better and worthier cause.

INQ.—*But the Christians do not think so.*

THEO.—Of course not, for they act on an erroneous belief. They think that by baptizing the body of an irresponsible savage they save his soul from damnation. One church forgets her martyrs, the other beatifies and raises statues to such men as Labre, who sacrificed his body for forty years only to benefit the vermin which it bred. Had we the means to do so, we would raise a statue to Father Damien, the true, practical saint, and perpetuate his memory forever as a living exemplar of Theosophical heroism and of Buddha- and Christ-like mercy and self-sacrifice.

INQ.—*Then you regard self-sacrifice as a duty?*

THEO.—We do; and explain it by showing that altruism is an integral part of self-development. But we have to discriminate. A man has no right to starve himself *to death* that another man may have food, unless the life of that man is obviously more useful to the many than is his own life. But it is his duty to sacrifice his own comfort, and to work for others, if they are unable to work for themselves. It is his duty to give all that is wholly his own and can benefit no one but himself if he selfishly keeps it from others. Theosophy teaches self-abnegation, but does not teach rash and useless self-sacrifice, nor does it justify fanaticism.

INQ.—*But how are we to reach such an elevated status?*

THEO.—By the enlightened application of our precepts to practice; by the use of our higher reason, spiritual intui-



tion, and moral sense ; and by following the dictates of what we call "the still small voice" of our conscience, which is that of our Ego, and speaks louder in us than the earthquakes and the thunders of Jehovah, wherein "the Lord is not."

INQ.—*If such are our duties to humanity at large, what do you understand by our duties to our immediate surroundings ?*

THEO.—Just the same, plus those that arise from special obligations with regard to family ties.

INQ.—*Then it is not true, as it is said, that no sooner does a man enter into the Theosophical Society than he begins to be gradually severed from his wife, children, and family duties ?*

THEO.—It is a groundless calumny, like so many others. The first of the Theosophical duties is to do one's duty by all men, and especially by those to whom one's *specific* responsibilities are due, because one has either voluntarily undertaken them—such as marriage ties—or because one's destiny has allied one to them—such as those we owe to parents or next of kin.

INQ.—*And what may be the duty of a Theosophist to himself ?*

THEO.—To control and conquer, through the Higher Self, the lower self ; to purify himself inwardly and morally ; to fear no one, and naught, save the tribunal of his own conscience ; never to do a thing by halves—i.e., if he thinks it the right thing to do, let him do it openly and boldly ; and if wrong, never touch it at all. It is the duty of a Theosophist to lighten his burden by thinking of the wise aphorism of Epictetus, who says :

Be not diverted from your duty by any idle reflection the silly world may make upon you, for their censures are not in your power, and consequently should not be any part of your concern.

INQ.—*But suppose a member of your Society should plead inability to practise altruism to other people on the ground that*

*"charity begins at home"; urging that he is too busy, or too poor, to benefit mankind or even any of its units; what are your rules in such a case?*

THEO.—No man, on any pretext whatever, has a right to say that he can do nothing for others. "By doing the proper duty in the proper place, a man may make the world his debtor," says an English writer. A cup of cold water given in time to a thirsty wayfarer is a nobler duty, and of more worth, than a dozen dinners given away, out of season, to men who can afford to pay for them. No man who has not got it in him will ever become a Theosophist; but he may remain a member of our Society all the same. We have no rules by which we can force any man to become a practical Theosophist if he does not desire to be one.

INQ.—*Then why does he enter the Society at all?*

THEO.—That is best known to him who does so. For, here again, we have no right to prejudge a person, not even if the voice of a whole community should be against him, and I may tell you why. In our day *vox populi*—so far as regards the voice of the educated, at any rate—is no longer *vox Dei*, but ever that of prejudice, of selfish motives, and often simply of unpopularity. Our duty is to sow seeds broadcast for the future, and see they are good; not to stop to inquire *why* we should do so, and how and wherefore we are obliged to lose our time, since those who will reap the harvest in days to come will never be ourselves.

#### ON CHARITY.

INQ.—*How do you Theosophists regard the Christian duty of charity?*

THEO.—What charity do you mean—charity of mind, or practical charity on the physical plane?

INQ.—*I mean practical charity, as your idea of universal brotherhood would include, of course, charity of mind.*

THEO.—Then you have in your mind the practical carrying out of the commandments given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount ?

INQ.—*Precisely so.*

THEO.—Then why call them “Christian”? For, although their Saviour preached and practised them, the last thing the Christians of to-day think of is to carry them out in their lives.

INQ.—*And yet many are those who pass their lives in dispensing charity.*

THEO.—Yes, out of the surplus of their great fortunes. But point out to me that Christian, among the most philanthropic, who would give the shivering and starving thief who steals his coat his cloak also, or offer his right cheek to him who smites him on the left, and never think of resenting it.

INQ.—*Ah ! but you must remember that these precepts have not to be taken literally. Times and circumstances have changed since Christ's day. Moreover, he spoke in parables.*

THEO.—Then why do not your churches teach that the doctrine of damnation and hell-fire is to be understood as a parable too ? Why do some of your most popular preachers, while virtually allowing these parables to be understood as you take them, insist on the literal meaning of the fires of hell and the physical tortures of an “asbestos-like” soul ? If one is a parable, then the other is. If hell-fire is a literal truth, then Christ's commandments in the Sermon on the Mount have to be obeyed to the very letter. And I tell you that many who do not believe in the divinity of Christ—like Count Leo Tolstōi and more than one

Theosophist—do carry out these noble and universal precepts literally; and many more good men and women would do so were they not more than certain that such a walk in life would very probably land them in a lunatic asylum—so Christian are your laws !

INQ.—*But surely every one knows that millions and millions are spent annually on private and public charities ?*

THEO.—Oh yes; and half of it sticks to the hands it passes through before getting to the needy, while a good portion of the remainder gets into the hands of professional beggars, who are too lazy to work, thus doing no good whatever to those who are really in misery and suffering. Have you not heard that the first result of the great outflow of charity toward the East End of London was to raise the rents in Whitechapel some twenty percent. ?

INQ.—*What would you do, then ?*

THEO.—Act individually and not collectively; follow the Northern Buddhist precepts:

Never put food into the mouth of the hungry by the hand of another.

Never let the shadow of thy neighbor [a third person] come between thyself and the object of thy bounty.

Never give to the sun time to dry a tear before thou hast wiped it.

Never give money to the needy, or food to the priest, who begs at thy door, *through thy servants*, lest thy money should diminish gratitude, and thy food turn to gall.

INQ.—*But how can this be applied practically ?*

THEO.—The Theosophical idea of charity means *personal* exertion for others; *personal* mercy and kindness; *personal* interest in the welfare of those who suffer; *personal* sympathy, forethought, and assistance in their troubles or needs. Theosophists do not believe in giving money through other people's hands or organizations. We believe in giving to the money a thousandfold greater power and

effectiveness by our personal contact and sympathy with those who need it. We believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much, if not more than, the emptiness of the stomach; for gratitude does more good to the man who feels it than to him for whom it is felt. Where is the gratitude which your "millions of pounds" should have called forth, or the good feelings provoked by them? Is it shown in the hatred of the East End poor for the rich, in the growth of the party of anarchy and disorder, or by those thousands of unfortunate working-girls, victims to the "sweating" system, driven daily to eke out a living by going on the streets? Do your helpless old men and women thank you for the workhouses; or your poor for the poisonously unhealthy dwellings in which they are allowed to breed new generations of diseased, scrofulous, and rickety children, only to put money into the pockets of the insatiable Shylocks who own houses? Therefore it is that every sovereign of all those "millions" contributed by good and would-be charitable people falls like a burning curse instead of a blessing on the poor whom it should relieve. We call this *generating national Karma*, and terrible will be its results on the day of reckoning.

#### THEOSOPHY FOR THE MASSES.

INQ.—*And you think that Theosophy would, by stepping in, help to remove these evils, under the practical and adverse conditions of our modern life?*

THEO.—Had we more money, and had not most of the Theosophists to work for their daily bread, I firmly believe we could.

INQ.—*How? Do you expect that your doctrines could ever take hold of the uneducated masses, when they are so abstruse*



*and difficult that well-educated people can hardly understand them ?*

THEO.—You forget one thing : that your much-boasted modern education is precisely that which makes it difficult for you to understand Theosophy. Your mind is so full of intellectual subtleties and preconceptions that your natural intuition and perception of truth cannot act. It does not require metaphysics or education to make a man understand the broad truths of Karma and reincarnation. Look at the millions of poor and uneducated Buddhists and Hindûs, to whom Karma and reincarnation are solid realities, simply because their minds have never been cramped and distorted by being forced into an unnatural groove. They have never had the innate human sense of justice perverted in them by being told to believe that their sins would be forgiven because another man had been put to death for their sakes. And the Buddhists, note well, live up to their beliefs without a murmur against Karma or what they regard as a just punishment ; whereas the Christian populace neither lives up to its moral ideal, nor accepts its lot contentedly. Hence murmuring and dissatisfaction, and the intensity of the struggle for existence in Western lands.

INQ.—*But this contentedness, which you praise so much, would do away with all motive for exertion and bring progress to a standstill.*

THEO.—And we Theosophists say that your vaunted progress and civilization are no better than a host of will-o'-the-wisps flickering over a marsh which exhales a poisonous and deadly miasma. This because we see selfishness, crime, immorality, and all the evils imaginable, pouncing upon unfortunate mankind from this Pandora's box which you call an age of progress, and increasing *pari passu* with the growth of your material civilization. At such a price, better the inertia and inactivity of Buddhist countries,

which have resulted only as a consequence of ages of political slavery.

INQ.—*Then are all these metaphysics and mysticism with which you occupy yourself so much of no importance ?*

THEO.—To the masses, who need only practical guidance and support, they are not of much consequence ; but for the educated, the natural leaders of the masses, those whose modes of thought and action will sooner or later be adopted by these masses, they are of the greatest importance. It is only by means of the philosophy that an intelligent and educated man can avoid the intellectual suicide of believing on blind faith ; and it is only by assimilating the strict continuity and logical coherence of the Eastern, if not esoteric, doctrines that he can realize their truth. Conviction breeds enthusiasm, and “enthusiasm,” says Bulwer Lytton, “is the genius of sincerity, and truth accomplishes no victories without it ;” while Emerson most truly remarks that “every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm.” And what is more calculated to produce such a feeling than a philosophy so grand, so consistent, so logical, and so all-embracing as our Eastern doctrines ?

INQ.—*And yet its enemies are very numerous, and every day Theosophy acquires new opponents.*

THEO.—And this is precisely what proves its intrinsic excellence and value. People hate only the things they fear, and no one goes out of his way to overthrow that which neither threatens nor rises beyond mediocrity.

INQ.—*Do you hope to impart this enthusiasm one day to the masses ?*

THEO.—Why not ?—since history tells us that the masses adopted Buddhism with enthusiasm, while, as said before, the practical effect upon them of this philosophy of ethics

is still shown by the smallness of the percentage of crime among Buddhist populations as compared with every other religion. The chief point is to uproot that most fertile source of all crime and immorality—the belief that it is possible for men to escape the consequences of their own actions. Once teach them that greatest of all laws, Karma and reincarnation, and besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger.



## *THE TWELVEFOLD CHAIN OF CAUSATION*

### FUNDAMENTAL BUDDHISTIC BELIEFS.

I. Buddhists are taught to show the same tolerance, forbearance, and brotherly love to all men, without distinction; and an unswerving kindness towards the members of the animal kingdom.

II. The universe was evolved, not created; and it functions according to law, not according to the caprice of any God.



III. The truths upon which Buddhism is founded are natural. They have, we believe, been taught in successive kalpas, or world-periods, by certain illuminated beings called BUDDHAS, the name BUDDHA meaning "Enlightened".

IV. The fourth Teacher in the present Kalpa was Sākya Muni, or Gautama Buddha, who was born in a royal family in India about 2,500 years ago. He is an historical personage, and his name was Siddhārtha Gautama.

V. Sākya Muni taught that ignorance produces desire, unsatisfied desire is the cause of rebirth, and rebirth, the cause of sorrow. To get rid of sorrow, therefore, it is necessary to escape rebirth; to escape rebirth, it is necessary to extinguish desire; and to extinguish desire, it is necessary to destroy ignorance.

VI. Ignorance fosters the belief that rebirth is a necessary thing. When ignorance is destroyed, the worthlessness of every such rebirth, considered as an end in itself, is perceived, as well as the paramount need of adopting a course of life by which the necessity for such repeated rebirths can be abolished. Ignorance also begets the illusive and illogical idea that there is only one existence for man, and the other illusion that this one life is followed by states of unchangeable pleasure or torment.

VII. The dispersion of all this ignorance can be attained by the persevering practice of an all-embracing altruism in conduct, development of intelligence, wisdom in thought, and destruction of desire for the lower personal pleasures.

VIII. The desire to live being the cause of rebirth, when that is extinguished, rebirths cease, and the perfected individual attains by meditation that highest state of peace called *Nirvāna*.

IX. Sākya Muni taught that ignorance can be dispelled and sorrow removed by the knowledge of the four Noble Truths, *viz.*—

1. The miseries of existence ;
2. The cause productive of misery, which is the desire ever renewed, of satisfying oneself without being able ever to secure that end ;
3. The destruction of that desire, or the estranging of oneself from it ;
4. The means of obtaining this destruction of desire. The means which he pointed out is called the noble eight-fold Path ; *viz.*, Right Belief ; Right Thought ; Right Speech ; Right Action ; Right Means of Livelihood ; Right Exertion ; Right Remembrance ; Right Meditation.

X. Right Meditation leads to spiritual enlightenment, or the development of that Buddha-like faculty which is latent in every man.

XI. The essence of Buddhism as summed up by the Tathāgata (Buddha) himself, is :

To cease from all sin,  
To get virtue,  
To purify the heart.

XII. The universe is subject to a natural causation known as "Karma". The merits and demerits of a being in past existences determine his condition in the present one. Each man, therefore, has prepared the causes of the effects which he now experiences.

XIII. The obstacles to the attainment of good karma may be removed by the observance of the following precepts, which are embraced in the moral code of Buddhism: *viz.*, (1) Kill not; (2) Steal not; (3) Indulge in no forbidden sexual pleasure; (4) Lie not; (5) Take no intoxicating or stupefying drug or liquor. Five other precepts which need not be here enumerated should be observed by those who would attain, more quickly than the average layman, the release from misery, and rebirth.

XIV. Buddhism discourages superstitious credulity. Gautama Buddha taught it to be the duty of a parent to have his child educated in science and literature. He also taught that no one should believe what is spoken by any sage, written in any book, or affirmed by tradition, unless it accord with reason.

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## THE BUDDHIST CATECHISM

136. Q. *One chief pillar of Buddhistic doctrine is, then, the idea that every effect is the result of an actual cause, is it not ?*

A. It is ; of a cause either immediate or remote.

137. Q. *What do we call this causation ?*

A. Applied to individuals, it is Karma, that is, action. It means that our own actions or deeds bring upon us whatever of joy or misery we experience.

138. Q. *Can a bad man escape from the out-workings of his Karma ?*

A. The *Dhammapada* says : " There exists no spot on the earth, or in the sky, or in the sea, neither is there any in the mountain clefts, where an (evil) deed does not bring trouble (to the doer). "

139. Q. *Can a good man escape ?*

A. As the result of deeds of peculiar merit, a man may attain certain advantages of place, body, environment and teaching in his next stage of progress, which ward off the effects of bad Karma and help his higher evolution.



170. Q. *If we were to try to represent the whole spirit of the Buddha's doctrine by one word, which word should we choose ?*

A. Justice.

171. Q. *Why ?*

A. Because it teaches that every man gets, under the operations of unerring KARMA, exactly that reward or punishment which he has deserved, no more and no less. No good deed or bad deed, however trifling, and however secretly committed, escapes the evenly-balanced scales of Karma.

172. Q. *What is Karma ?*<sup>1</sup>

A. A causation operating on the moral, as well as on the physical and other planes. Buddhists say there is no miracle in human affairs : what a man sows that he must and will reap.

<sup>1</sup> Karma is defined as the sum total of a man's actions. The law of Cause and Effect is called the *Paṭichcha Samuppāda Dhamma*. In the *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha teaches that my action is my possession, my action is my inheritance, my action is the womb which bears me, my action is my relative, my action is my refuge.

251. Q. *What do we call the basic principle on which the whole of the Buddha's teaching is constructed?*

A. It is called *Patichcha Samuppāda*.<sup>1</sup>

252. Q. *Is it easily grasped?*

A. It is most difficult; in fact, the full meaning and extent of it is beyond the capacity of such as are not perfectly developed.

253. Q. *What said the great commentator Buddhaghosha about it?*

A. That even he was as helpless in this vast ocean of thought as one who is drifting on the ocean of waters.

<sup>1</sup> This fundamental or basic principle is designated in Pāli *Nidāna*—chain of causation or, literally, "origination of dependence". The twelve *Nidānas* are 1. *Avijjā*, ignorance of the truth of natural religion; 2. *Samkhārā*, causal action, karma; 3. *Viññāna*, consciousness of personality, the "I am I"; 4. *Nāma-rūpa*, name and form; 5. *Salāyatana*, six senses; 6. *Phassa*, contact; 7. *Vedanā*, feeling; 8. *Tanhā*, desire for enjoyment; 9. *Upādāna*, clinging; 10. *Bhava*, individualising existence; 11. *Jāti*, birth, caste; 12. *Jarā-marana-soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsa*, decay-death-grief-lamentation-dejection-despair.

“ At the time the blessed Buddha was at Uruvela on the shores of the river Neranjara as he rested under the Bodhi tree of wisdom after he had become Sambuddha, at the end of the seventh day having his mind fixed on the chain of causation he spake thus: ‘from Ignorance spring the samkharas of threefold nature—productions of body, of speech, of thought. From the samkharas springs consciousness, from consciousness springs name and form, from this spring the six regions (of the six senses, the seventh being the property of but the enlightened); from these springs contact from this sensation; from this springs thirst (or desire, kama, tanha) from thirst attachment, existence, birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. Again by the destruction of ignorance, the samkharas are destroyed, and their consciousness, name and form, the six regions, contact, sensation, thirst, attachment (selfishness), existence, birth, old age, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection, and despair are destroyed. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.’ ”

Knowing this the Blessed One uttered this solemn utterance:

“ When the real nature of things becomes clear to the meditating Bhikshu, then all his doubts fade away since he has learned what is that nature and what its cause. From ignorance spring all the evils. From knowledge comes the cessation of this mass of misery, and then the meditating Brahmana stands dispelling the hosts of Mara like the sun that illuminates the sky.”

Mahavagga

1st Khandhaka



## Aphorisms on Karma.

THE following, among others not yet used, were given to me by teachers, among them being H. P. Blavatsky. Some were written, others communicated in other ways. To me they were declared to be from manuscripts not now accessible to the general public. Each one was submitted for my judgment and reason; and just as they, aside from any authority, approved themselves to my reason after serious consideration of them, so I hope they will gain the approval of those my fellow workers to whom I now publish them.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE.



## APHORISMS.

(1) There is no Karma unless there is a being to make it or feel its effects.

(2) Karma is the adjustment of effects flowing from causes, during which the being upon whom and through whom that adjustment is effected experiences pain or pleasure.

(3) Karma is an undeviating and unerring tendency in the Universe to restore equilibrium, and it operates incessantly.

(4) The apparent stoppage of this restoration to equilibrium is due to the necessary adjustment of disturbance at some other spot, place, or focus which is visible only to the Yogi, to the Sage, or the perfect Seer: there is therefore no stoppage, but only a hiding from view.

(5) Karma operates on all things and beings from the minutest conceivable atom up to Brahma. Proceeding in the three worlds of men, gods, and the elemental beings, no spot in the manifested universe is exempt from its sway.

(6) Karma is not subject to time, and therefore he who knows what is the ultimate division of time in this Universe knows Karma.

(7) For all other men Karma is in its essential nature unknown and unknowable.

(8) But its action may be known by calculation from cause to effect; and this calculation is possible because the effect is wrapped up in and is not succedent to the cause.

(9) The Karma of this earth is the combination of the acts and thoughts of all beings of every grade which were concerned in the preceding Manvantara or evolutionary stream from which ours flows.

(10) And as those beings include Lords of Power and Holy Men, as well as weak and wicked ones, the period of the earth's duration is greater than that of any entity or race upon it.

(11) Because the Karma of this earth and its races began in a past too far back for human minds to reach, an inquiry into its beginning is useless and profitless.

(12) Karmic causes already set in motion must be allowed to sweep on until exhausted, but this permits no man to refuse to help his fellows and every sentient being.

(13) The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects.

(14) In the life of worlds, races, nations, and individuals, Karma cannot act unless there is an appropriate instrument provided for its action.

(15) And until such appropriate instrument is found, that Karma related to it remains unexpended.

(16) While a man is experiencing Karma in the instrument provided, his other unexpended Karma is not exhausted through other beings or means, but is held reserved for future operation; and lapse of time during which no operation of that Karma is felt causes no deterioration in its force or change in its nature.

(17) The appropriateness of an instrument for the operation of Karma consists in the exact connection and relation of the Karma with the body, mind, intellectual and psychical nature acquired for use by the Ego in any life.

(18) Every instrument used by any Ego in any life is appropriate to the Karma operating through it.

(19) Changes may occur in the instrument during one life so as to make it appropriate for a new class of Karma, and this may take place in two ways: (*a*) through intensity of thought and the power of a vow, and (*b*) through natural alterations due to complete exhaustion of old causes.

(20) As body and mind and soul have each a power of independent action, any one of these may exhaust, independently of the others, some Karmic causes more remote from or nearer to the time of their inception than those operating through other channels.

(21) Karma is both merciful and just. Mercy and Justice are only opposite poles of a single whole; and Mercy without Justice is not possible in the operations of Karma. That which man calls Mercy and Justice is defective, errant, and impure.

(22) Karma may be of three sorts: (*a*) Presently operative in this life through the appropriate instruments; (*b*) that which is being made or stored up to be exhausted in the future; (*c*) Karma held over from past life or lives and not operating yet because inhibited by inappropriateness of the instrument in use by the Ego, or by the force of Karma now operating.

(23) Three fields of operation are used in each being by Karma: (*a*) the body and the circumstances; (*b*) the mind and intellect; (*c*) the psychic and astral planes.

(24) Held-over Karma or present Karma may each, or both at once, operate in all of the three fields of Karmic operation at once, or in either of those fields a different class of Karma from that using the others may operate at the same time.

(25) Birth into any sort of body and to obtain the fruits of any sort of Karma is due to the preponderance of the line of Karmic tendency.

(26) The sway of Karmic tendency will influence the incarnation of an Ego, or any family of Egos, for three lives at least, when measures of repression, elimination, or counteraction are not adopted.

(27) Measures taken by an Ego to repress tendency, eliminate defects, and to counteract by setting up different causes, will alter the sway of Karmic tendency and shorten its influence in accordance with the strength or weakness of the efforts expended in carrying out the measures adopted.

(28) No man but a sage or true seer can judge another's Karma. Hence while each receives his deserts appearances may deceive, and birth into poverty or heavy trial may not be punishment for bad Karma, for Egos continually incarnate into poor surroundings where they experience difficulties and trials which are for the discipline of the Ego and result in strength, fortitude, and sympathy.



(29) Race-Karma influences each unit in the race through the law of Distribution. National Karma operates on the members of the nation by the same law more concentrated. Family Karma governs only with a nation where families have been kept pure and distinct; for in any nation where there is a mixture of family—as obtains in each Kaliyuga period—family Karma is in general distributed over a nation. But even at such periods some families remain coherent for long periods, and then the members feel the sway of family Karma. The word “family” may include several smaller families.

(30) Karma operates to produce cataclysms of nature by concatenation through the mental and astral planes of being. A cataclysm may be traced to an immediate physical cause such as internal fire and atmospheric disturbance, but these have been brought on by the disturbance created through the dynamic power of human thought.

(31) Egos who have no Karmic connection with a portion of the globe where a cataclysm is coming on are kept without the latter's operation in two ways: (*a*) by repulsion acting on their inner nature, and (*b*) by being called and warned by those who watch the progress of the world.

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