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Turn, turn, my wheel! Turn round and round,
Without a pause, without a sound:
So spins the flying world away!

Longfellow.

HUMAN NATURE

BY

ARTHUR ROBSON

THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA
1940

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PREFACE

IT has sometimes occurred to me that the habit writers have of putting quotations of any length in smaller type than the text proper savoured somehow of a certain lack of respect for the authority cited, especially when the quotation was from one of the Gospels or from an author such as Shakespeare or Wordsworth. I mention this by way of explanation for my departure from accepted usage in that I have adopted the rule of putting quotations in italics or —in a few exceptional cases—between inverted commas.

But, in adopting this rule, I have made it necessary to find a way, other than the use of italics, of emphasizing those words and passages to which I wanted to draw the reader's special attention. This need I have met by the use of bold type, not only in the text proper, but also in the italicized quotations.

I have retained the use of italics for expressions taken from foreign languages and for those Sanskrit words which are not yet naturalized in the English language.

I should like to take this opportunity of acknowledging the great debt this book and I owe to two people: First, to my brother, Clan D. Ross, whose help enabled me to write it; and secondly, to my brother, Bhikkhu Arya Asanga, for having given so much of his valuable time to the labour of going through the proofs, and for the innumerable improvements that have been made in the book as a result of his helpful suggestions.

A. R.

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ERRATA

p. 27, l. 22, For " prevailing " read " preliminary.'
p. 303, l. 13, For " our " read " your."

No notice is taken here of four minor and obvious misprints.

There's one on p. 119, l. 2, that has its funny side—" They " with a capital T.

HUMAN NATURE

CHAPTER I

HUMAN NATURE

MAN has entered into the secrets of the stars, whose distances from us are so immense that the mind reels in trying to form a conception of them, and has made the rocks recount to him the tale of life on this planet during an age whose remoteness in time is equally incomprehensible to the mind. Is it not strange, then—strange, that is, for its remarkable incongruity—that man, who has probed the secrets of things so far removed in time and space, should still be baffled by the problems which his own nature presents? Our natural instincts, habits, urges and impulses are still profound mysteries to us. We leap and shout for joy, weep in sorrow, laugh when amused, blush for shame, sigh in disappointment, without knowing in the very least why we do these things. Why should grief find expression in tears, amusement in laughter, joy in leaping and shouting? Surely it is possible to tear aside the veil that shrouds the origin of all these ingredients of human

nature, the instincts which go to make up our being and by which we live—"human nature's daily food," as Wordsworth calls them.

Although some of the emotions are named after their outward expressions,[1] these outward expressions, the natural and instinctive body movements and attitudes and facial expressions which accompany them and make their presence known to others, have hitherto been treated as of no account. But we shall find that they are most valuable clues, with the aid of which we shall yet be able to analyse all our emotions and instinctive urges and discover their origin and essential nature.

Evolution Postulated

Most thinking people to-day accept it as truth that the human race has been evolved from some species akin to the ape; which, in its turn, was evolved, possibly not directly, from some species of reptile; that, again, from some amphibian; that, from some fish; and so, further and further back along a line that stretches right back to our original protozoic parent. We should not be surprised, then, to find that habits that had been developed in those earlier forms of life should persist in their human descendants. In fact, we have in this the

[1] For example, "superciliousness" means literally "eyebrow-ish-ness," and "contumely" means "swelling out."

explanation of all those things that we find ourselves doing, not knowing why.

Some Natural Human Habits

We swing our arms when we walk, an action which does not materially assist locomotion. But the corresponding action was an essential part of the locomotor movements of our quadruped forebears. Our arms, it should not be forgotten, have been evolved from the forelegs of quadrupeds and retain to some extent the habits of their originals. We move our arms chiefly from force of habit.

Another human habit, the explanation of which lies in the fact of our being evolved from quadrupeds, is that of putting the hand to the head or face when one is deep in thought. It is an impulse to flex one's arms that is at the back of this habit, and it will be noticed that this is usually accompanied by an impulse to flex the legs or draw them in. The attitude of Rodin's " Le Penseur " is typical of a man deep in thought. The flexing of the arms and legs has its origin in the animal's habit of crouching when observantly watching anything. It has a very definite purpose in doing so, that of observing without **being** observed. While it keeps the stranger under close and continued observation, it does everything it can to ensure that it will remain unnoticed by the latter and crouches down to take whatever

cover the grass or undergrowth will afford. Even in the open it will remain perfectly still in a crouching position. This it does almost entirely from habit, habit acquired in a different environment, but even thus the action lessens very appreciably the chances of its being observed.

The human habit of puckering the brows when thinking appears to serve no purpose. But the same habit served a very definite purpose for the animal, that of bringing the ears forward, one of the things that it does in its effort to focus all its faculties of perception on the object under observation.

On the other hand, in circumstances resembling those in which an animal would put its ears back, the skin of the forehead is drawn backwards in man, an action which is even spoken of as "putting back one's ears," an expression which has a connotation of coming to grips with things, either as attacker or attacked. An animal in such circumstances tucks its ears away for safety, but the corresponding action in man is merely a facial expression, which has no appreciable effect on the ears.

Again, a sense of the uncanny gives one "the creeps" or "goose flesh." Goose flesh is just an action of the skin that has as its object the raising of the hair on its surface. Animals, we know well, when they sense danger, raise their hair, and we may be prepared to assume that we have in this

habit of theirs the origin of our "goose flesh." It is true that the upstanding hair or fur affords an animal slightly better protection than it does in its normal position, but it is not sufficient to make us believe that the animal, when it senses danger, consciously and deliberately raises its fur in order to afford itself a greater measure of protection. Notice too that, commonly, it is only the hair along the spinal ridge that is raised. And our own "creeps" are experienced chiefly in the same region. We must go further back than the mammal to discover its origin.

Now, the hair or fur of mammals and the scales of reptiles are one and the same thing. A hair is just a "modified scale." But the scales of the saurians were businesslike things, and the raising of them not only afforded their owners better protection, but, in addition, gave them a terrifying appearance. I think we should be correct in assuming that the habit of erecting their scales, particularly the dorsal range, was originally a conscious and deliberate action with them. The habit, having been developed by the saurians, has been bequeathed to their descendants along both lines, the mammalian and avian. A bird's habit of raising its hackles when standing up to defend itself has exactly the same origin as a cat's habit of bristling its fur in the same circumstances. Feathers are modified scales, just as fur is.

Goose flesh is also occasioned by a sense of cold. It is obvious that this is a relic of the animal's habit of ruffling its fur as a protection from cold, as Puss does on a cold day. Birds have a similar habit. It would appear that the power of erecting fur or feathers, having been inherited from the saurians by mammals and birds, is used by both as a protection from cold, although it is doubtful that reptiles would use the corresponding faculty to that end. And so it happens that a sense of cold causes the human skin to erect the vestigial hairs on its surface, although the action no longer helps to ward off cold.

Survival of Habits

These examples, as also the scores of others given later in this book, would appear to justify us in believing that everything that we do by instinct or nature is a survival of a habit that had been acquired by our forebears at some time during the long history of our evolution from the original protozoon. Also, that these habits were developed as a result of actions done deliberately **in compelling circumstances** for a definite and conscious purpose. And with the habit has been developed the vehicle of the habit, the particular unit of the body—organ, limb, or whatever else it may be—in which the habit is centred. I have put the words, "in compelling

circumstances," in bold type to emphasize their importance. Every organ of our bodies, every muscle, every nerve, has been called into being in the struggle to live, and so fierce has been the struggle and so strong the habit that has developed in the course of it that the habit has long survived the particular phase of the struggle that called it into existenee. Habits formed in one environment are carried into another where, often, they not only serve no purpose, but are foolish and dangerous besides.

An instance of this is the chicken's problematical habit of "crossing the road." Hitherto we have always attacked this problem by way of the assumption that some obscure purpose—known, presumably, only to the fowl itself—is served by this habit. But the bird, if it could think, would be quite as puzzled by it as are its human observers. When, however, we recognize that the habit is likely to be one that has been brought over from a different environment where it was both useful and deliberate, the solution of our problem is not far to seek.

Wild birds, it will have been noticed, that spend most of their time in the trees, always fly directly forward when danger swoops at them, and evade it by dipping in their flight—the wisest thing for them to do, as they have learnt by experience. One species comes to be domesticated and, having in course of

time practically lost the use of its wings, finds its movements confined to a plane, the ground. The fowl has learnt to **run away from** anything that approaches it fairly slowly. But, if it is taken unawares when something suddenly swoops down in its direction, it is caught in the swirl of the older instinct and **flies directly forward.** So, if it happens to be facing the road when a motor dashes round the corner, it **flies** frenziedly across the track of the car.

An old habit like this usually asserts itself when one acts **quickly** upon any familiar set of conditions suddenly presenting itself; that is, when the reaction follows immediately upon the stimulus. Cold reason does not get an opportunity of intervening.

Even when it is not necessary to act quickly, a habit will be found in action if the reason is dulled, as, for example, by fatigue. Darwin has acquainted us with the fact that the dog's well-known habit of turning round once or twice on the hearth rug before composing its weary frame to rest is an evolute[1] of the habit of its untamed ancestor—wolf

[1] I am introducing two terms here, the need of which will be sorely felt in the following pages. If, in the course of evolution, X becomes Y, X is the "**original**" of Y, and Y is the "**evolute**" of X For example, the fish's swim bladder is the **original** of our lung, and the lung is an **evolute** of the swim bladder The animal's habit of crouching when observantly watching anything is the **original** of the human habit of putting the hand up to the head or face when deep in thought; our habit of swinging our arms when walking is an **evolute** of the animal's use of its forelegs in walking.

or jackal or whatever else it was—of turning round in the long grass or undergrowth to smooth out a couch for itself before curling up to sleep. But, whereas the original habit served a useful purpose, the dog's habit is just a survival of it and, in the changed conditions, appears to serve no purpose whatever.

Now all this has a very deep interest for us because it enables us to dissect human nature and discover the explanation of all those problems in which it abounds, the innumerable things we do which seem so utterly foolish and purposeless.

Wrath

Consider this problem. A man opens a drawer and, having taken out what he wanted, pushes it gently to get it back into its place. But the drawer, after the immemorial and inscrutable manner of its kind, sticks fast. He pushes it harder, but to no effect. He exerts all his strength to get it home, but the drawer withstands his best efforts. He then attacks it savagely, kicking at it and working himself into a white heat to overcome the opposition, doing irreparable damage to his property and regrettable injury to himself, as if the drawer had some fell purpose in offering resistance and it behoved him to smash it rather than give way.

Our problem is: What makes the man behave in this manner? What, in other words, is Wrath?

There is one ingredient of it that is readily discernible, namely, a sense of being opposed or obstructed in the exercise of one's will or, if the will be quiescent, a sense of being assailed or attacked. And Wrath is a frenzied calling up of all one's powers to overcome the opposition.

Now, if we turn our attention to conditions amongst wild animals, we observe a very important fact: When they attack each other, it is generally a matter of life and death. Hence, when an animal finds itself attacked, it throws all its energies into the balance to drive off, or overthrow, or utterly exterminate, its opponent, and, the more it is resisted, the more frenziedly does it fight. That is, of course, if it cannot, or does not, seek safety in flight. An animal "sees red" in all opposition that is offered to it, and the wisdom of experience has inculcated in it the habit of giving itself no pause in its struggles to overcome the opposition. It has, in fact, a maddening horror of its powers flagging.

When we come to the human stage we become familiar with several degrees of opposition and learn to see it in its true perspective and to put forth just the requisite energy to overcome it. Or to yield, when we see that yielding is more graceful than resistance. But, very often, especially when one acts hastily or when one's attentions are scattered or when one's mind is otherwise rendered incapable

of assessing the true value of things, the older instinct asserts itself and, losing all sense of proportion, one lashes out in a wild fury as if one's existence were at stake and one saw annihilation in giving way. As in the case of our man and his drawer.

In the same way, one learns to appreciate the true nature of jests and banter at one's expense, But sometimes one's subconscious memory harks back to a past that one has not quite put behind one, and one seems to see oneself bayed about by a hostile ring where no such exists, and to see social death for oneself in these attacks. One is "**mort**ified." And one acts as one was accustomed to act then, threatening and menacing so as to assert one's prestige or, in terms of an animal's consciousness, to make oneself so formidable as to discourage aggression.

It is interesting to observe how the facial expressions and the gestures which accompany wrath are reminiscent of the animal. These vary to a very marked extent according to the particular contents of the mind at the time and, in fact, change with great rapidity as the psychological phases change from one to another. The brow is fiercely contracted, or contracted in the middle with the sides drawn up, or else the whole brow is drawn backwards over the forehead. The contracting of the brow serves, as we have already seen, to bring an

animal's ears forward, a natural thing to do when concentrating all its attentions—and so all its organs of perception—upon anything that shows signs of aggression. Hence, as long as hostilities are still in the barking stage (corresponding to the abusing and fulminating stage in the human), the animal focusses all its attentions on its opponent. But, when the two come near each other, it is divided between the necessity of keeping its ears directed towards its opponent and that of tucking them back for safety. And, as a rule, it keeps them in a midway position, or vacillates between the two. Hence the corresponding expression in the human. When, however, the blood lust is let loose in an animal, it puts its ears and caution behind and grapples fiercely with its enemy with murderous intent. From this we have the "murderous look" which, in man or beast, is so terrifying.

The movements and set of the mouth are characteristic because, remember, the mouth plays a most important part in an animal's struggles. Before one actually comes to grips, the lower jaw is brought forward, the lips parted, sometimes with a snarl—an animal preparing to grip does the same thing. But, when one actually comes to grips, one clenches the teeth, although the mouth plays no part whatever in the struggle. This action of clenching the teeth is readily seen to be an evolute of that of the

animal of setting its jaws upon a convenient item of hostile anatomy.

The body is leant forward as if one were bearing back a force that has been brought to bear on one. One or both arms are thrust out before one, as in pointing at one's opponent or at the door. This is an expression of the urge to hold off or push off one's opponent. The same impulse is seen to be at the back of such actions as pushing over furniture or making a gesture as if one were pushing one's opponent off. The action of bringing the hand down violently on a table or anything else convenient or of smashing things to the ground is an expression of an urge to throw one's enemy to the ground.

So strong is the subconscious delusion of being back in the brute stage that it forces itself into full consciousness so far as to make one call an opponent "Beast," "Brute," "Monster," or something else of that kind. In fact the tendency to abuse an enemy—whatever the terms used—springs always from the subconscious notion of being up against something bestial and brutish.

Avarice

Quite as puzzling as human Wrath is human Avarice. As soon as one finds a thing to be desirable, one immediately wants **all** of it, or as much as

one can get. Men go on accumulating wealth out of all proportion to their needs, real or imaginary.

This is just an animal instinct, which, as developed in the environment in which an animal finds itself and applied to its proper subject matter, is perfectly sound, but is not quite so sound when carried over to human conditions and applied to a subject-matter other than the original.

When an animal succeeds in capturing a prey, it proceeds to devour as much as it can, knowing too well that what it leaves will probably be seized upon by others. And it wants to prevent others from getting any, having found by hard experience that things of a comestible nature are surprisingly rare and distressingly hard to capture. In these circumstances it is fairly well justified in seeking to have as much for itself as it can.

Now food is the first thing for which desire is felt, and the selfishness and greed which attach to desire at its beginning cling to it ever after, no matter what the object of the desire may be. But, whereas the animal's greed is subject to the limitations which the capacity of its stomach imposes, human greed often knows no limitations, attaching as it does to objects which may be possessed in any quantity. The lust for possessions derives its force, not from a sense of the value to one of the things desired, but from a subconscious

urge to secure them from others. Since this is independent of one's needs, it will continue as long as there is anything left which is not in one's possession, and so the lust, unless controlled by reason, will be insatiable.

Greed, like Wrath, makes one behave and look in a way that is reminiscent of the animal. The miser gloating over the figures of his balance at the bank behaves very much after the manner of an animal feasting itself off its quarry, his lips smacking, his eyes bulging, and his shoulders spread out as if to keep off marauders.

Niggardliness

Akin to Avarice is Niggardliness. Doesn't it give you furiously to think when you see a man with abundant wealth, exceeding all that his wildest needs would ever call for, loath to part with even the most insignificant little part of it? And yet the instinct in its original form is quite reasonable.

The sense of possession first appears in the animal in regard to a captured quarry. Now it happens that the thing possessed is always in one piece and, in the animal's mind, indivisible. It realises that if another animal were allowed to get hold of any part of it, it would probably result in its being despoiled of its entire possession. This attitude of mind, which makes it safeguard every

corner of what it holds, the loss of any part of which it dreads as involving the loss of the whole, becomes ingrained in it and is carried along into human conditions, where it is generally inapplicable.

Here again the instinctive human actions are reminiscent of the animal. An animal, when at its meal and approached by another, partly interposes its body between its meal and the other animal and, keeping its mouth over its meal and looking sideways, growls the other away. A man interposes a shoulder between himself and his petitioner and, turning his face stiffly downwards and partly to a side, growls out a refusal.

Covetousness

Let us next take the problem of Covetousness or Envy, of which the following is an example.

A hermit, who had disciplined himself to a supreme satisfaction with his simple life was beset by a host of demons of rather an inferior station in the infernal hierarchy, who had in vain been trying to tempt him with presentments of the world's allurements. The archfiend, coming that way, twitted them with gaucherie in the exercise of their calling and proceeded to give them a specimen of the work of a master craftsman. Bending over the hermit's shoulder, he whispered in his ear that his brother had just been made Bishop of Alexandria.

The hermit immediately started up with envy in his eyes.

Now, why? Why is it that an unexpected access of fortune to another makes one envious, and, most problematical of all, why is it that, as a result, one who has hitherto been satisfied with one's condition ceases to be satisfied with that condition, the inherent nature of which has in no way changed?

Animal instinct again. Whenever an animal sees another capture anything, it immediately sets upon the other, if it can, to despoil it of its capture, or else casts about to see if the act of spoliation is practicable. An animal has a way of regarding everything it sees as belonging to itself. Might is in very truth right in its world. Living, then, as it does, in this condition of things and in this assumption of all-ownership, it naturally regards anything that another animal has come by as something of which it has itself been deprived. Quite logically, then, it desires to take what it thinks it has a right to and it is this instinctive desire to have for oneself any gain that has fallen to another that, in the human, appears as Envy.

The differences between Avarice, Covetousness, and Niggardliness should be carefully noted. Avarice is the lust to get possession of as much as one can for oneself of a thing that one subconsciously regards as a *res nullius*; Covetousness is the lust to

get possession of something that is already in another's possession; Niggardliness is the instinct to keep in one's possession every particle of what one already has oneself.

Pride

One more problem: Why should a man who has attained, or who is under the impression that he has attained, excellence in any particular respect turn up his nose at another who aspires to a like excellence? The explanation is perfectly simple.

When an animal asserts itself, it is always as a challenge to another animal. In other words, it is an assertion of a feeling that it can hold its own against the other, manifested by its going up to the latter, which, if it feels itself the superior, warns it off by a snarl, which is the more unformed or incipient the greater its sense of being the stronger.

Now, when we come to human conditions, the assertion or putting forth of oneself takes innumerable forms which are in no way a challenge to anyone; as when one attempts to express oneself in art, or as an independent thinker, or poet, or actor, or organiser, or in any of the numberless ways in which one puts forth what is in one. But a person who has set himself up as an authority in that particular matter tends very often to regard this independent expression of another as a challenge to himself and

to see the other as intruding into his domain, and he instinctively makes an effort to overawe the other and make him edge off.

The essence of Pride consists, not in knowing one's ability in a particular art, but in subconsciously regarding that art as one's domain, in which one does not welcome intruders. The schoolboy who, having acquired a certain proficiency in, say, swimming, sneers at the clumsy efforts of another to acquire a like proficiency, subconsciously regards the latter as intruding too close upon, and in a way challenging, him.

The instinctive actions are those of a dog when approached by a strange dog which it does not feel it necessary to run away from. The turning up of the nose—usually only one wing of it, the side nearest the challenger—is an action which, in the animal, is incidental to the raising of its lip to bare its teeth. Sometimes, in both animal and human, this is accompanied by a curl-up of the lip so as to expose the canine tooth. Very often we bring the lower jaw forward so as to bring the incisors together, as if we had before us a thing that was too small to bite with the full jaw and required only to be nipped. The raising up of the eyebrow is an evolute of the animal's action of putting back its ears, since, although it feels itself the stronger, it takes at least the precaution of getting its ear out of the

way. The same mistrust makes it turn sideways and put its face upwards and away from the other. Its sense of its own strength notwithstanding, it prefers to keep its mouth out of reach to be ready for eventualities, and takes up a strategical position in case the other should suddenly attack.

What is Karma?

And so right through the long list of instincts, impulses, inclinations, tendencies and urges that throng our being. There is not one of them but, if scrutinized carefully, will be found to be a survival of a habit generated somewhere in the immense past. We find ourselves doing a number of things without, and even in spite of, our purposive will, and we are puzzled to know where the tendencies come from. We blame an outside agency, which we call the devil. Or, having discovered that the tendencies subsist in our vehicles, we tend to regard them as inhering in them by their very nature, not knowing that it was we that put them there. And, as we put them there, so it is we that must remove them. There is not a thing that we do for which we are not absolutely and entirely responsible, because, even if it is done through a habit that devours all reasons that may be put up to oppose it, that habit arose out of a series of actions which were done consciously and deliberately.

Shakespeare was fully cognizant of the fact that the devil in us is nothing else but the force of habit. He speaks of

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil. *Hamlet*

It is all this "doing"[1] of ours, coming from the past, that constitutes our Karma, using the word in the sense in which it was used in the ancient religious and philosophical literature of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. What we have been considering so far and will consider in the chapters that follow is the Karma of the human race as a whole. But, although each of us shares with his fellows these ingredients of human nature, we have each of us our own modifications of them and our own particular combination of characteristics, which constitute our personal Karma.

In the next chapter we shall go more fully into this subject of Karma and shall see what the true meaning was that was attached to the word by the sages of ancient India.

[1] "Karma" literally means "doing," and our karma is obviously our own "doing," not what others do to us.

CHAPTER II

KARMA

READER, you have possibly at some time or other asked yourself the question, "Why am I myself?" From where in this mighty complexity of things in which you find yourself comes that bundle of peculiarities, mannerisms, characteristic modes of thought, of feeling, and action, that you know as "I," and how have you come to be identified with that particular bundle and no other? The way one walks, the way one talks, the peculiar inflection of voice, the characteristic laugh or smile, the tendency to do everything neatly and well that one puts one's hand to (a tendency that, one finds, is not shared by **all** those that one knows), the disposition (again, somewhat peculiar to oneself) to be a dreamer, to ponder over the things that one sees around one in life—where does all this come from?

There is not a single trait of character, not a mannerism, but has its history, often a history full of event and absorbing interest, the beginnings of which lie so far back in time that one staggers at the thought of trying to discover them.

It is this mass of habits, mannerisms and peculiarities of nature, that which we know as our "character," that constitutes our KARMA, the record of our entire past,[1] the fount and origin of all the pleasure and pain that we experience. It is this that we take with us from one life to another.[2] Each trait of character is but a little eddy that goes down the years with us, circling in our life long after the original circumstances that called it into being have been left behind and been altogether forgotten. Every life adds its little quota of eddies or vortices, or modifies those already in existence, but, in general,

[1] *Your acts in the past . . . are indelibly stamped upon the record of Karma.*

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, p. 61.

[2] Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, in his *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, provides an illuminating simile:

Or, again, we could not take a better illustration, if a modern instance be permitted, than that of a series of billiard balls in close contact; if another ball is rolled against the last stationary ball, the moving ball will stop dead, and the foremost stationary ball will move on. Here precisely is Buddhist transmigration; the first moving ball does not pass over, it remains behind, it dies; but it is undeniably the ***movement of the ball,*** *its momentum, its* ***kamma,*** *and not any newly created movement, which is reborn in the foremost ball.*

I have already postulated the truth of the Evolution of Form, that is, of the physical form in which we incarnate (p. 2). I must now postulate that of the Evolution of Life, the "anima," the spirit that animates physical forms and that goes on dipping into matter again and again, emerging every time slightly changed as a result. It is not within the scope of this book to vindicate the truth of Re-incarnation, any more than that of the Evolution of Form. Should the reader contest it, the best that I can do is refer him to the existing literature on this important subject.

they remain at the end of a life very slightly changed from what they were in the preceding life.

Karma means all those things that we do by nature, whether our own individual, personal nature, or the nature that we share with the other members of our social class, or of our race, or the nature that is common to humanity in general, or to all mammals, or all vertebrates, or even that which is common to the whole of animate creation.

The *Bhagavad Gita* tells us,

All Karma is wrought by the energies of nature only. The self, deluded by egoism, thinketh, "I am the doer." III, 27.

The *Niralamba Upanishad* is perfectly explicit as to the meaning of Karma, where it is given in answer to a direct question:

What is Karma?

Karma is that action alone which is performed by the organs and ascribed to the Atma as "I do." In other words, those actions that are initiated by "the flesh," but which we regard as proceeding from the true "ego."

In the *Jain Sutras (Sutrakritanga)* we are told,

All this some have learnt and it has been well demonstrated in the Striveda. Though people know it, they do wrong ***impelled by Karma.***

It is the purpose of this book to examine some of the ingredients of our nature and attempt to discover what the compelling force was that set each karmic eddy spinning, to scan the features of the potter who set the wheel revolving on which we now find ourselves bound.[1]

We have seen that Greed, Pride, Wrath, etc., are but karmic wheels in our nature that we bring with us from the past.

Shaking off Greed, Pride, Deceit and Wrath, one becomes free from Karma.

Jain Sutras (*Sutrakritanga*)

There appears to be good ground for believing that in course of time it will be proved of all our natural habits and instincts that each of them has come into being in circumstances in which one has been compelled repeatedly to do a certain thing as an act of self-preservation ; that this act has gone on being repeated so often that it has become a habit ; and that this habit has been retained although the

[1] Dr. Coomaraswamy, in speaking of *the momentum of antecedent karma*, refers to *the brilliant simile of the potter's wheel, which continues to turn after the hand of the potter is removed.*

This appears to have been a stock simile with the sages of old. In the *Bhagavad Gita* we have,

Bound by thine own Karma, O son of Kunti, from delusion shalt thou do helplessly what thou likest not to do It rules over the hearts of all beings, causing them by its Maya (illusion) *to revolve as though mounted on a potter's wheel.* XVIII, 60-1.

But the word here rendered as " potter's wheel " may be used of any " machine."

circumstances in which it came into being have long since disappeared.

I have spoken here of a series of deliberate acts becoming a habit. It is most essential that we should understand precisely how this comes about.

Formation of a Karmic Eddy

Let us say that a creature—anywhere you like in the evolutionary scale—has had recurring to it an experience commencing with a certain set of conditions and leading up to consequences which it has found painful. On the next occasion when it meets that set of conditions it will naturally experience some apprehension of those consequences and will desire to prevent them. And so we get the beginnings of Emotion, straining away from something. On succeeding occasions the apprehension will grow and, with it, this emotion, this straining away from the dreaded consequences. This results in the creature casting about for a means of preventing them and, seeing one, of directing its will or throwing its being that way—Volition. But it does not yet translate Volition into Action. It is only after it has had some further experiences of the same kind that it definitely acts. But it does not achieve its purpose. Next time it tries harder; again without success. And so it goes on, Emotion, Volition and Activity becoming ever stronger until,

throwing all its powers into its endeavours. it finally succeeds in its efforts. And having done so, it never hesitates in future to seek that as its avenue of escape from the consequences it dreads, whenever it seems to recognize them as imminent. A habit has been developed. The train is laid of Cognition, Emotion, Volition, Activity—Cognition. the perception of a certain set of conditions (the " stimulus ") as being present, which it recognizes as likely to lead up to consequences which it remembers as having been painful ; Emotion, dread of those consequences, straining away from them ; Volition, the throwing of its being towards a condition in which it sees escape from them ; Activity, doing whatever is necessary to attain that condition.

Once the train is laid, the same stimulus tends to initiate the same train or cycle of thought, feeling, willing and doing, there being a tendency for the preliminary stages to become shorter and shorter and for thought to result in action with increasing quickness. Habit is turning into " second nature."

Ultimately, the preliminary stages are so fleeting as to leave no impression on the consciousness. The reaction follows, or seems to follow, directly on the stimulus. " Second nature " has become nature itself, KARMA.

The difference between consciousness and subconsciousness is just one of duration of attention.

The less the time that the attention is focussed on anything, the more indistinct is the impression on the memory. In the case of actions done from habit and second nature the consciousness gives but the merest glance at the conditions present, which it has recognized as familiar, and desire, will and activity follow in quick succession. In the case of actions which are done by Karma the time is so infinitesimal during which the attention is given to each of them that the impression left on the memory is ordinarily quite imperceptible. But, by scrutinizing one's nature long and intently, pondering often and earnestly over a habit that one has found in one's nature, one may be quick enough to arrest the consciousness at the moment when it glances at a set of conditions that it sees as present, and so determine what it is that the mind envisages that causes one to act in that particular way, and follow each step in the karmic cycle from the stimulus to the reaction.

The Root of Karma is Delusion

As a result one discovers a truth of the very greatest importance: that all Karma commences in a mistake; the root of Karma is Delusion. This is due to the fact that it is merely a cursory glance at the conditions present that initiates the action. Anything that in any way resembles the conditions

with respect to which the habit was developed is easily mistaken for them and starts one acting in the accustomed way.

They say that Karma has its origin in Delusion.
Jain Sutras (Uttaradhyana).

The root of Karma is Agnana.[1]
Vedanta Sutras

People often realize in a way that their actions are not governed by the conditions actually present, but they do not admit that the thing that does largely rule them is Delusion. They act "on principle." X denies a beggar alms "on principle;" Y severely punishes a child for a trivial offence "on principle;" Z—"on principle" again—exacts his miserable shekels from a debtor for whom the amount constitutes practically his entire worldly wealth. What is this precious "principle" that people hold in such religious awe?

It appears that the beggar is denied relief because X has visions of hordes of beggars swarming around, encouraged by this one's success; consequently, of his being divested of all his substance in furnishing needy people. Read again what has been said about Niggardliness (p. 15) and you will see that this is nothing other than what the subconscious mind envisages, thinly disguised. The conscious mind cannot accept it in its original crudity, but fashions

[1] Cognate with the Greek, *α-γνώμη* = want of judgment,

and camouflages it into something presentable, the "principle" to which he finds himself so bound.

In the other cases too the "principle," if examined closely, will be found to be just the karmic illusion tricked out so as to be made presentable and acceptable.

It is Fear that Gives Karma its Strength

Besides Illusion there is another factor that is always present in Karma—FEAR—a straining away from something that one regards as imminent. Every breath we take, every heart-beat, is actuated by Fear,—yes, **mortal** Fear. The original action was actuated by the fear of death itself, and that fear is still present deep in the subconscious mind.

We may put Illusion and Fear together and say that **at the root of all Karma is a mistaken or groundless fear.** And it is this fear that gives Karma its strength.

The Popular Conception of Karma

All this will no doubt be found to be at variance with the popular doctrine of Karma. Let us have a look at that doctrine. I believe I am right in saying that, as generally understood it may be stated as follows: Whatever misfortunes overtake us in this life are the results of our misdeeds of past lives

and of our past in this life; likewise for present **good** fortune and past **good** deeds.

As a corollary to this there is the idea of a sort of pleasure fund to one's credit, and an accumulated debt of "bad karma" written up against one; that is a certain amount of good fortune, no more, no less, which is in store for one; also a similar store of bad fortune.

It is believed that nothing can happen to you which is not "the result by the operation of natural laws" of what you have done in the past. If someone swindles you of a considerable sum of money, you are asked to believe that that is the effect by the operation of natural laws of your having done something of the same kind to someone in one of your past lives.

So, when one has "worked out" all one's "bad karma" one may walk the earth secure in the faith that no further misfortune of any kind can befall one.

Now that is a very garbled rendering of the teachings of the sages of old, a poor travesty of Truth. As long as you live among the world's millions you may rest assured that you will get your share of the knocks of fortune. Even a Lord of Karma would not be immune from them. Where the difference would lie between the latter and an ordinary mortal is in the effect these things would have on each of them respectively. What would cause an ordinary

man intense pain would leave a Lord of Karma serene and unruffled.

Also, no matter how perfect you may be, how great your heart, how tender your sympathy, you cannot, **do what you will,** forever avoid giving pain. Does one "make bad karma" every time one gives pain to another? How is the karmic liability of an action to be assessed?—according to the amount of pain **intended** by the doer? or the amount of pain occasioned within his **cognizance?** or just the amount of pain inflicted, regardless of whether the doer intended it or was even cognizant of it?

There is one element in the present popular doctrine of "karma" which militates against its being accepted as a natural law. We are told that certain "Lords of Karma" control our karma and ration it, as it were, so that we might not be overwhelmed by the incidence of too much "bad karma" coming all together, or, on the other hand, use up our "good karma" all at once.

Now it is not usual for natural laws to be such that anyone, however highly placed, can keep the effects of them in his pocket and hand them out at a time that he deems most suitable. The idea has probably arisen from meeting the expression, "Lord of Karma," in the ancient scriptures. There are certainly Lords of Karma, but they are lords of their own karma, not your karma and mine. They have

made themselves masters of their karma and brought it under their control.

A very obvious flaw in the popular conception of the "law of karma" is its utter purposelessness, a flaw that is so conspicuous that it makes nine people out of every ten reject the theory at once. They object quite rightly, "If the misfortunes that befall me to-day are the results of my misdoings of the past, of what use are they to me as a corrective if I have no inkling what misdoings they are the effects of?"

Nor has it been shown on what ground it can be claimed to be a "law." Not a single concrete instance has yet been pointed out showing how such a happening as, say, one's house catching fire and being burnt down is the effect by the operation of natural laws of something that one did in a previous life. Scientific laws are built up on observed facts. But here you have what claims to be a "law" which is altogether up in the air. Not only has it not been built up on observed facts, but there are no facts, observed or observable, to give it support of any kind.

We were warned more than half a century ago that we had got the doctrine of Karma all wrong. The Master K. H., in a letter to Col. Olcott, tells him,

You have talked a great deal about Karma but have hardly realized the true significance of that doctrine.

And then he goes on to say,

The time is come when you must lay the foundation of that strict conduct—in the individual, as well as in the collective body—which, ever watchful, guards against conscious as well as unconscious deception.

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, (Second Series), p. 7.

Take careful note of those last two words, "unconscious deception." It is this unconscious deception—the subconscious delusion that I have referred to as being at the root of Karma—that we must be ever on our guard against if we are to obtain release from the bonds of Karma.

"Karma" Means "Doing"

The word "karma" means "doing." And your karma is **your** doing, what **you** do, not what others do to you. But the word is often used to mean not what one does oneself, but what others do **to** one. If Jones has his house burgled, that is said to be his "karma," poor Jones! who did not "do" so much during the burglary as even be aware of it.

What Question Is the Doctrine an Answer to?

In Theosophical parlance the word has come to be synonymous with "fate" or "destiny." The

so-called "law of Karma" is a sort of amalgam of the doctrine of Heaven-Hell and that of Predestination or "kismet." It is intended as an answer to two questions at once: "How is one punished for one's evil deeds and rewarded for the good?" and "What law governs our destiny and determines what good and what evil fortune shall befall us in life?"

In actual truth the teaching of the sages of old on the subject of Karma was intended as an answer to neither one question nor the other. It was the solution that the philosophical East had discovered to the problem attaching to human nature in general and one's individual nature in particular. Karma accounts for all one's natural and characteristic reactions to different stimuli.

In so doing it accounted for Pain and Pleasure. Karma is the cause of all the pleasure and pain that we experience. It is probably a misinterpretation of this law that is responsible for the popular Theosophical doctrine. Two very different things have been confused: Pain, and the occasion of Pain. A valuable piece of property belonging to one is destroyed—during an earthquake, let us say—and the loss grieves one intensely. Now there are two distinct things: the loss, and the pain it has occasioned. And, although it has not yet been shown how the loss itself can be the effect by the operation of natural laws of one's actions of the past, either in

this life or in earlier lives, the pain that one suffers is **entirely** dependent on one's past.

If, as is maintained by some Theosophists, the "accidents of life" are not accidents but the direct results of our own actions, it is not likely that the Mahachohan would use the expression "**blind** fortune." [1]

The Wheel of Karma

A common—and fairly obvious—simile likens Karma to a rolling wheel [2] or a running car [2] which, carried along by its own momentum, goes on running after the motive force which set it going has been removed. In Chapter X we shall deal at greater length with this subject of the Wheel of Karma.

Compensation

But there is a pleasanter side to the story, as we shall see in the next chapter. The impetus, the almost ungovernable impetus, of Karma, from being a merciless tyrant, as we are disposed to regard it—in actual truth, as we shall see, a perfectly just judge that measures out Pain to us in absolutely equal measure with the Pleasure we have taken and

[1] See *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, p. 9.

[2] See the quotations from *Psalms of the Early Buddhists* in Ch. X.

makes us undo every iota of the evil we have ever done—becomes a power for our uplift. The Mahachohan tells us,

It is our own Karma, the cause producing the effect, that is our judge, our saviour in future lives.

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, p. 8.

Let us see how Karma becomes our saviour.

CHAPTER III

NATURAL PIETY

I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

WORDSWORTH

WHAT does Wordsworth intend by the expression "natural piety"? The word "piety," obviously, is not used here in its ordinary sense of religious devotion or holiness, but has the meaning that the original word (*pietas*) had with the Romans, namely, respect for one's father and one's ancestors generally. Although for the average Roman this meant little more than an attitude of awe and dutifulness towards them, there was a finer piety called forth by a true recognition of their heroic qualities and a consciousness of the patrimony of moral and intellectual worth that he had derived from them.

Finer even than this, and nobler, is the piety that sees, not in their achievements, but in their failures, not in their prosperity, but in their adversity, the origin and source of one's own success and one's own

prosperity; that sees in their misfortunes, their sufferings, their vexations, the foundations and the very cause of one's own happiness and strength. It is as if a boy on growing up to an age of self-realization should discover that his father was unlettered and ill-accomplished as compared with himself and in a deep glow of love and honour for him should say, "Dad, if your education had not been so neglected, mine would not have been watched with such zealous care. Whatever academic successes I have gained are in reality your successes."

This is **filial** piety. Now, if we can adopt the same attitude, not to bygone generations of ancestors, but to past ages of one's growth, one has what Wordsworth calls **natural** piety. The yearnings, struggles, and endeavours of our childhood produce in us qualities to which our mature years are the heir. The child is father of the man. Even the **sufferings** of our early years are not without their value.

How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself!

WORDSWORTH, *The Prelude*

Conceive of a still greater natural piety that bows its head in honour and gratitude to our animal existence as Wordsworth does to childhood, that sees in our worst vices the seeds of the noblest virtues germinating unobserved, and recognizes in the brute passion, the bestial greed, the cruelty, the intense egoism, the harrowing fear, that we inherit from our animal state, the foundations, as indispensable as they are deep and solid, upon which shall rise the edifice of all that is best and godliest in us. It is this higher piety, whose boundaries are those of infinity, and which looks down the long vista that stretches from eternity to eternity, that is the subject of this chapter.

The Seeds of Virtue Germinate in Brute Nature

The belief comes to us that all baseness is perverted virtue; that God planted certain powers in us which we have turned to base purposes. But the truth is quite the reverse. The powers are developed in us slowly and over immense expanses of time in their application to ignoble ends—as we come to regard them—and, when matured, are applied to nobler and higher purposes. The animal propensities that we bring with us from our animal era become the virtues of the superman. And the human era is the period of transmutation.

Wrath and Unyielding Tenacity of Purpose

Let us take an example. Wrath, as we have seen, springs from the animal's fear of destruction by another animal and is an unyielding resistance to the other and a frenzied summoning up of all its powers to save its life. What later develops into Wrath is at first merely a terrorized struggle to escape from its aggressor. Then the animal learns to beat off attack and, later, to overthrow and even annihilate an assailant. But it takes ages of oppression, of constant terror, of intense and often excruciating pain at the hands of relentless persecutors, being repeatedly killed in pain and agony, to produce in a creature that harrowing terror of death that makes it throw all its powers into the balance to keep death off and steels it to that fierce temper that makes it unhesitatingly grapple with the most formidable of opponents and hold on with a grim tenacity that relaxes only when its assailant has been completely overcome.

Now, in Wrath, and inextricably mixed up with it, is this unbending spirit, this unbreakable will. But it is a will to destroy, a determination to kill. Any sense of obstruction or opposition makes one stiffen in resistance, and, the greater the opposition, the more does one throw all one's strength into one's endeavours to overcome it.

When human conditions are reached, however, one begins to encounter difficulties of a different

nature, the overcoming of which is in no way prejudicial to anybody and is very often beneficial to very many besides oneself, the difficulties, for instance, which the problems of life present to us, the difficulties we meet with in overcoming the disabilities inherent in our human condition.

And now Karma, from being an oppressor, becomes a saviour. We have often had occasion to bewail the presence of that fiend in us that prevents our wrath from cooling once it has been aroused. Now do we bless that temper of spirit which, once one has come to grips with a difficulty, prevents one from relaxing and makes one go on wrestling with it until it has been overcome.

And yet it is necessary. Were not tenacity of purpose and strength of will worked into our nature in this way, we should be for ever irresolute in the nobler works we set our hands to. It is only thus that we are enabled to persist in those endeavours which ultimately shall raise us from our human condition to that of the superman and carry to final victory our struggles to curb and ride triumphant over Karma. Isn't it wonderful that out of Karma is wrought a power and a weapon by which we overcome Karma—which, in fact, makes that conquest sure?

Praise to the end,
Thanks to the means which nature deigned to employ. *Ibid.*

It is interesting to observe that the same instinctive actions that accompany Wrath are inherited in chastened form by its evolute, Determination. One sets the jaw and contracts the brow and brings one's fist down on anything convenient very much as one does in Wrath.

Greed and Thoroughness

In the same way as Strength of Will is evolved out of Wrath, so out of Avarice is evolved the quality of Thoroughness. The instinct for fullness or allness is first learnt in relation to the worthless and ephemeral, and then comes to govern our quest for the eternal and limitless. We are not satisfied with a scrap or fragment of goodness; we strive for perfection. What ages of existence spent by the animal under the law of the jungle, subject to the constant fear of being set upon and deprived of anything it had come by, were necessary to thoroughly ingrain in its nature the instinct to secure for itself as much as it could in the only way it knew of, that is, by eating it! But out of the human survival of this urge of greed or avarice is evolved the excellent human instinct for perfection in all that we strive after.

Envy and Emulation

Out of Envy, to take another example, is distilled the excellent quality of Emulation. One cannot see

another in possession of anything without experiencing discontent and wanting it for oneself. That is Envy—ignoble instinct! But, were it not for that, we should not know the thrill of striving after those excellences that we admire in others. Here again, it is at first the worthless and ephemeral in another's possession that first excites our discontent, but we learn thereby to emulate what is nobler and grander.

Niggardliness and Carefulness

Out of Niggardliness is distilled Carefulness, the scrupulous watch over every particle of a thing to see that it yields its utmost and that nothing is lost from it. In its highest form it is that gemlike quality which is at the back of that meticulous care that one gives to the details of everything that one does, the pains which a writer takes to ensure that every single word will convey exactly the meaning it is intended to convey; which an artist or composer takes to assure himself that every line or every note will yield its fullest in portraying those subtle things of life that a single misplaced line or note might turn into the commonplace and bathetic. It is the instinct from which is derived that transcendent capacity for taking pains that Carlyle has identified with genius.

The quality is sometimes called Thoroughness, but it must be carefully distinguished from the

Thoroughness that is evolved out of Avarice. The latter seeks completeness or all-ness in the thing taken as a whole, whereas this instinct drives one to perfection in all its details; the one aims at fullness in quantity, the other, at perfection in quality.

Idle Curiosity and Thirst for Knowledge

There is, again, that remarkable propensity of Curiosity or Inquisitiveness. People want to know everything about people they meet or that live around them, requiring information with regard to even petty and inconsequential details.

This is a survival of the animal instinct of Inquisitiveness. As a result of terrible experiences the animal learns to be suspicious of every strange thing that it finds in its vicinity, and scrutinizes it to inform itself of its nature and intentions. The tendency survives into the human state and, in its original form, idle curiosity is somewhat puzzling to account for, as it is so purposeless under human conditions. But from it comes that invaluable instinct that makes man scrutinize whatever he finds around him that is strange and mysterious, and inform himself of its nature and origin. Thanks to this instinct, the boundaries of human knowledge are continually receding into the unexplored, and more and ever more of the dark and mysterious unknown is lighted up and made familiar to us.

The Lotus Roots in Slime

And so the tale goes on. There is not a variety of Karma, ugly and offensive though it be, but yields a gem of rich value that has been forming unnoticed in it during the ages of its existence and growth.

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music. *Ibid.*

It is easy to follow in one's mind the development of music out of the barbaric noises which savages set up to give vent to their feelings, joyous, bellicose, or whatever else they may be. The first tender shoots of music appear when the raucous yells and unrestrained belabouring of anything handy that will resound are made in a crude sort of way to keep time, to be rhythmical. This little germ of music then begins to develop with the introduction of variations of pitch and goes on becoming more and more complex, the mere noise being gradually refined out of it until we have those soul-awakening gems of musical utterance of modern masters of harmony. So also, in the dust that we are, in each of our karmas with all their ugliness and vigour, a tiny germ of divinity in one or other of its many aspects ensconces itself. And through the ages it goes on developing, unnoticed and unsuspected, until, having matured, it displays itself in all its beauty and fullness. Eastern symbology likens the

divinity in us to a lotus. It roots in slime and grows up secretly, being unnoticed until it bursts into bloom above the dark waters in the light of day.

It is really a supreme marvel, not only that the good in us develops out of evil, but that the evil and the good are for long ages so inextricably intermixed. Says Wordsworth,

There is a dark, inscrutable workmanship
That reconciles discordant elements,
Makes them cling together in one society. Ibid.

The Tares and the Good Seed

Our Divine Lord has compared them to tares and wheat growing together in such a way that any attempt to destroy the tares would ruin the wheat also. Let them grow together, he says, until the wheat is ripe, and then the tares can be plucked up and destroyed and the wheat gathered into the barn.[1]

We have all at one time or another observed the presence in us of pairs of incongruous elements, the one evil and regrettable, the other good and desirable; the good being very often weak, the evil strong and lusty; and both so interwoven that it would be impossible to eradicate the evil without

[1] Our Lord, by the use of two more similes, figures for us (1) that the good is at first very small and insignificant "like unto a grain of mustard seed," and (2) that it goes on developing unobserved "like unto leaven" until it has transmuted the whole.

destroying the good. Let them grow together, our Lord advises, until the good is mature, and then it will be easier to destroy the evil while saving the good. Do not disturb Karma until its derivative virtue is ripe. The *Bhagavad Gita* re-echoes our Lord's advice :

Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people attached to Karma, but, himself acting in a balanced manner, let him lead them to act likewise.
III, 26

Special Applicability of this to the Young

The wisdom of this is best seen in dealing with children, because childhood is a period of revision or recapitulation, when one runs briefly through one's animal existence. The resemblance of child psychology to animal psychology has been freely remarked upon by psychologists. Animal karma is revived afresh in its many forms and, as we grow up, we learn afresh to free ourselves from it. All children tend to be greedy, inquisitive, and self-willed. The course too often adopted in dealing with them is to break their wills, to silence their inquisitiveness, and to suppress their greediness. But the wise mother, acting in conformity with the *Gita* without knowing it, does not inhibit the child's karma, but, giving him full freedom, herself acts " in a balanced manner " and so points the way

for the child, adding a word or two of counsel distilled from her knowledge and experience and sweetened with her love. As a result, ordinarily, the animal propensities fall away from him in course of time.

But we must not close our eyes to the fact that, in spite of all this, the evil may remain undiminished, may even increase in strength. The same love and sympathetic indulgence that produced a Cordelia produced also a Goneril and a Regan. The same genial sunshine that brings the wheat to a rich maturity produces a lusty growth in the tares also.

We must not, however, jump to the conclusion that the mother's action was wrong because of the results being evil. It must not be forgotten that another's action, besides her own, has contributed to those results. And one can never predict what that action will be. But **it would be wrong** to act on the assumption that it must certainly be evil.

CHAPTER IV

LAUGHTER

HUMAN laughter is akin to the barking of dogs, although the resemblance is not sufficiently close to be striking or even recognizable. The two things have a common origin, the human habit being farther removed from the original than the canine. But, if we keep it in mind that they are cognate, it will be easy to understand laughter. By observing the causes which ordinarily set a dog barking we shall be able to understand the human instinct.

Laughter and the Grotesque

In the first place, a dog will bark at anything strange that it sees near enough to itself. Akin to this is human laughter at the grotesque in the appearance of other people and things. But with this sense of the grotesque there must also be a certain sense of nearness before one feels impelled to laugh. We do not laugh at an African chief in all his native get-up, however grotesque it may be, but we cannot

help laughing when we see it all surmounted by an ordinary English top hat. It is this that brings it " near " to oneself.

Bergson had an inkling of this " nearness " as a necessary feature of the psychological complex that produces laughter, but he noticed only one manifestation of it: Man laughs only at man, he says. If a man laughs at a cow or a fowl or anything else non-human, it is only because of something about it that makes it resemble a human being. Or if one's own dog, which is " near " one by reason of constant association, is made to appear queer—as a result, say, of having been clipped—it starts one laughing. Reverse the position and let your dog come upon you unexpectedly in some outlandish garb and it will start barking, and may continue barking even after it has satisfied itself of your identity.

Raillery

I have said that human laughter has an affinity with a dog's barking. That this is so is shown by the fact that many stimuli that provoke laughter in human beings make dogs bark. Horse play is an example. But the stimuli which set a dog barking are not always of the same nature; there are different kinds of—may I use the expression?—barkings. So also there are different kinds of laughter, whose stimuli and psychological texture

vary somewhat, but which are nevertheless the same fundamentally.

The laughter that proceeds from a sense of the grotesque is, as we have seen, akin to a dog's barking at something strange that has made its appearance near by. Similarly, the laughter that goes with raillery will be found to have an affinity with baiting or the action of dogs in barking at a cat that they have cornered or have forced to take refuge on a wall or up a tree.

Humour

Laughter is, however, generally associated with a sense of the comic or humorous, and it is this that we must scrutinize most carefully. What is the psychological essence of Humour? Examine it in its most rudimentary form, the laughter of an infant evoked by an elder child pretending to fall. Most grown-ups, too, will give vent to their inclination to laugh if a companion should suddenly slip and fall. This, the crudest form of humour, gives us the key to the psychology of Humour of all kinds, because in all humour there is always a sense of somebody else suddenly falling or finding himself in an awkward situation from which one is free oneself. The fall need not be a physical one, and that somebody may be oneself, one's other self, the self of a moment ago.

There is no doubt about it that the laughter that is evoked by a sense of the humorous is akin to the barking of dogs at one of their number as it emerges from the water into which it had been thrown. The two instincts trace back to a common origin.

Now we know that, with wild animals, if one of a group of them is suddenly set upon and downed by anything strange, the others will make off in alarm, or start off as if to do so but, recovering themselves and realizing that there is nothing to be unduly frightened of, commence barking [1] furiously at the intruder to scare it away. This action is due more to fear on their own account than to solicitude for their comrade, as is evidenced by the fact that they do not discriminate very clearly between the attacker and the attacked: it is well known that animals will attack and maul one of their own number that has

[1] I should like it to be understood that I shall use the word "bark" in this chapter without referring specifically to the barking of dogs, except when they are expressly mentioned. The word will be used generically of any succession of grunts or howls made by any species of animal, particularly those in the line along which the human race claims descent. That wild animals do not ordinarily emit grunts or howls in such quick succession as we find in the human laugh, or even a dog's barking, is beside the point. Natural cries, like everything else that is subject to change, come in course of time to be so altered as to bear little resemblance to their originals. The bark of a well-bred dog is different to that of a pariah and is to all appearances an entirely different thing to the howl of jackals. And yet those who have studied the subject assure us that the species of animal that Neolithic man tamed and from which all dogs are descended was more akin to our jackal than to any other wild creature that we know to-day.

had the misfortune to have been seized by something strange, or will at least bark at it and worry it.

From this there develops the habit of barking when anything untoward suddenly happens to one of their fellows, although they do not see what the cause of it was. They see in it an indication of the presence of danger and bark furiously to scare it off, and they bark in the direction of their fallen companion, associating him in their minds with the lurking danger.

Now, if we could examine the contents of the mind of one of them at such moments, we should probably discover the following :

1. A sense of another in close proximity having suddenly come to grief in some way ;

2. A consequent apprehension of the same thing happening to itself ;

3. An incipient sense of pleasure in feeling that it has itself escaped being in the other's predicament ; that the danger that threatens itself is not so alarming as to make it cower terror-stricken or make off in a wild panic ; and that it can possibly scare it off by barking furiously at it and worrying it.

Now in the human sense of Humour the same elements are present. But their relative proportions have considerably changed. The fear element (No. 2 in our analysis), which looms so large in the mind of the animal, is reduced to microscopic dimensions

and the pleasure element (No. 3) has so increased as virtually to fill the psychological picture.

But all three elements are always present: in the absence of any one of them, one is not moved to laugh. Whenever one's sense of humour is stirred, there is always a sense of someone having come a cropper, although it may be an intellectual, and not a physical, one. But the fall must be sudden and unexpected; there must be an element of surprise in it. This explains why one does not laugh at a joke that is familiar.

Besides the fall being sudden it must be in close proximity, sufficiently near one to allow of its occasioning the fear element. The nearness need not be one that can be measured in feet and inches: it may be nearness in interest or association. One sees someone fall awkwardly on the other side of the street and is not affected one way or another by the incident until one suddenly discovers that it's dear old Augustus, one's crony, and one immediately bursts out laughing. Up to that moment the incident was not "near" enough to provoke laughter. We have also in this matter of "nearness" the explanation why the humour of one race often falls flat with people of other races. Gilbert is found rather dull by people who have not been brought up in the traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race and are not prone to the failings (or "fallings") of that race.

The "fall" must be sufficiently near one's own nature—whether human, racial, or individual—to make one laugh.

But the most important element in the sense of Humour is the consciousness of there being nothing alarming in the incident. Laughter is INCONSEQUENCE. There is a certain range of "fallings" that cause one to laugh. Outside that range on the one hand are things that are too serious to allow one to laugh; and on the other are trivialities that have not sufficient "threat" in them to allow of the presence of the fear element. As we go through life some things pass out of this range while others come into it. A youngster laughs at the tumbles of a circus clown or the show that one of them makes of lambasting the other. The little chap is delighted that it is happening to someone else and not himself, having subconsciously a fear of it, and yet not an alarming fear. But he will grow out of this particular sense of the comic when his consciousness grasps how unreal it all is: there is no fear of it actually happening to the clown and still less to himself. Again, the crude malapropisms, bulls and puns that we found so amusing in school leave us cold when we realize how far from the world of actual reality they are. We have risen out of the subconscious fear of ourselves—or anyone else—committing the blunders in question.

But, as we give up the old laughs, we learn to laugh at something new. I say "learn to laugh" because there is virtue in laughter. Notice the last element in our analysis. In turning and barking, and not cowering paralysed with fear or flying panic-stricken, the animal shows its sense of the fact that the trouble is not an overwhelming one. When one learns to laugh at anything, one passes from the stage of regarding it as a matter of life and death to that of seeing it in its true perspective, possibly something absurdly insignificant. Laughter is one avenue of escape from fear and has in it the physiological benefit of shaking all one's nerves and muscles out of the tension into which fear puts them.

The Physical Ingredients of Laughter

Let us examine the physical ingredients of laughter. The head is thrown back to a greater or less extent; the skin of the lower part of the face is drawn back so as to extend the mouth; the mouth is opened and the teeth exposed, and a series of explosions of mirth produced. Also, there is a tendency to give anybody who happens to be conveniently near a push, or to make a gesture as if one were pushing somebody, or to bring one's hand down on somebody or something, as when one slaps one's knee or slaps somebody else on the back.

The action of throwing the head back and turning the face upward to some extent when laughing merits attention. This action more than anything else establishes the animal origin of the habit which in man takes the form of laughter. Man, remember, differs from his brute progenitors in that his trunk is vertical whereas theirs is horizontal. Ordinarily our faces are turned in a direction that is at right angles to the spinal line, whereas, with them, it is a continuation of it. But when one is caught in the swirl of the animal habit, one's face tends naturally to turn in a direction which is the same as the animal's, a continuation of the spinal line.

The instinctive tendency to push or bring one's hand down on somebody or something is certainly an evolute of the animal's habit of rearing up against the aggressor and trying to bear it down. Throw a dog into the water, and you will find that, when he emerges, his companions will not only bark at him but also get him down with their forepaws and tease him.

Bergson in his treatise on *Laughter* takes not the least notice of the actions which constitute laughter. An analysis of any human emotion is incomplete unless it includes an analysis and explanation of the instinctive human expression of that emotion. Physical matter is the epidermis of Spirit, and what happens on the surface is just an expression (a

"pressing out" through that surface) of what is within.

Some may feel justified in refusing to believe that the human laugh, which, at its ugliest, is not as ugly as the vicious grinning and grunting of, say, apes at anything strange that has ventured into their midst, has its origin in something of that kind. But, remember, it was not so very long ago that a very similar consideration made man refuse to acknowledge the ape as a very near relative.

The reason for this great difference is the great difference that there is between the mental complex that accompanies laughter and that which goes with its original. The fear element, as has already been remarked, is very much reduced. At the same time the sense of pleasure that the animal feels in being able to bark away its fear is much greater in the human consciousness because of man's assurance of his freedom to laugh, of his ability to take that pleasure without let or hindrance.

Laughter-Poise

The next step from that is a realization of the illusion contained in the fear, and so we arrive at a composure in which the urge to laugh is put aside—a frame of mind for which there is no word in the English language and which I shall designate by the term "laughter-poise", that is, the frame of mind

in which one recovers one's poise from an inclination to laugh. But such is the force of a habit in which the reaction follows immediately upon the stimulus that one will laugh with perfect heartiness on subsequent occasions until one regains one's composure.

Infectiousness of Laughter

When we know the history of the habit which in the human being appears as laughter, we have no difficulty in understanding that very remarkable phenomenon in connection with it, its infectiousness. We know how infectious barking is with dogs. If one of them barks, others immediately follow suit, and still others, that happen to be within earshot, will take it up. The first one, by barking, communicates its fear to others, who, in catching the fear, catch with it the urge to dispel it in the same way. The urge to follow suit becomes so ingrained that, when it comes to the human being, people find it hard to keep themselves from laughing when they see or hear someone else laughing heartily.

Ticklishness

There is another kind of laughter which remains to be considered, that which is occasioned by tickling. It will be noticed that those parts of the body —the waist, neck, etc.,—are the most ticklish which

correspond to the parts of an animal's body which are usually seized by a beast of prey. Animals belonging to species that are commonly preyed upon learn to be somewhat sensitive in those regions and to recoil instantly from any strange contact thereabouts. This sensitiveness comes down to man with the rest of the heritage from his animal ancestors and takes the form of the remarkable sensitiveness of those parts to touch or pressure. The struggles to free oneself are accompanied by convulsive laughter. One can readily see that this is an evolute of the animal's action in similar circumstances of barking or setting up an outcry.

Protecting the Neck

There is another result of the animal's long experience in this connection. An animal learns to be ever on the *qui vive*, ever ready to imagine some danger lurking nearby, ever expectant of a pounce upon its neck by something that has lain in ambush for it or approached it unawares. This disquiet and the will to afford some protection to the neck has in most animals produced some sort of protective covering for it. In some it takes the form of a mane or just a general shagginess of the hair about the neck. In a large class of animals the protection is afforded by a pair of horns. That horns are fundamentally defensive, and not offensive, is

evidenced by the fact that as a rule they branch or curl, a circumstance which, while it somewhat impairs their effectiveness as weapons of attack, gives a fuller protection to the neck.

In the human this protection for the neck is afforded by long hair which, in nature, hangs from the head. The presence of this covering gives one a sense of composure and dissipates to an appreciable extent the disquiet that manifests itself in an ever increasing degree as one moves further and further from childhood and into the thick of life. When the hair is shorn off, the disquiet tends to reassert itself, unless a substitute of some sort is provided to take its place.

This unrest is not altogether without its merits and its apologists. It keeps many people busy who would otherwise be idle. But consider how much of all the stir and bustle of the world is utterly purposeless, people going round and round interminably in small circles of activity in a feverish and panicky condition of mind, for whom it would be far more useful to be able to escape from their disquiet and, for a few golden minutes of serene composure, to look over their life and activities and see how little of it is really worth while and how much is just part of

the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world.
WORDSWORTH, *Tintern Abbey.*

That there is a natural human tendency to afford protection to the head and the nape of the neck appears in the headgear of many races and classes of people—primitive races like the Red Indian and Zulu and, at the other extreme, highly cultured people like the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, and many others.

People of a highly sensitive nature would in particular feel the urge to keep the nape of the neck covered. Hence we have the nun's hood, the monk's cowl, and the long hair worn by poets, artists, mystics, yogis, and others. The same instinctive urge finds expression in the shawls, parasols, and furs, used by women. Hence also that remarkable phenomenon that among races widely separated by time and space, whereas men have repeatedly adopted the fashion of the shorn head, women have always shown a tendency to keep their hair long.

CHAPTER V

JOY

CAST your eyes over the natural habits of man and you will be surprised how many there are which could never have been called into existence by the conditions in which men live now or those in which they have lived at any stage of human history. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the habits of our fellow creatures on the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder. Take, for example, the dog's habit of wagging its tail when pleased : we search in vain for anything in its life or in that of its wild ancestors—jackal or wolf, whichever it was—that would account for the development of such a habit.

Joy and Its Expression

Let us glance at the different ways in which different creatures react to the sensation of joy or happiness. Lambs and kids frisk ; birds sing or soar or do both ; an infant crows and throws out its limbs ; a child leaps and shouts. Are these expressions of joy truly different, or are they in essence really the same ?

Joy Is Escape

Now let me quote some lines from Wordsworth which touch on the analysis of Joy :

And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills ; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever Nature led : more like a man
***Flying from something that he dreads,** than one*
Who sought the thing he loved.

Tintern Abbey

Notice particularly those words, " flying from something that he dreads." Wordsworth has correctly divined that the reaction that manifests itself as joy arises from an urge to escape. Joy is ESCAPE.

But, you will say, granted that careering about and even leaping and an infant's throwing out its limbs can be shown to be reactions due to an urge to " fly from something that one dreads," what part in an effort to escape can a dog's tail-wagging be shown to have ? What creature wags its tail in an endeavour to make off ? And how can shouting, or singing, or an infant's crowing, or a dog's yowl of joy, be shown to be prompted by the will to get moving ?

But it is true nevertheless, as we shall see. All modes of expressing joy trace their origin to the action of some creature or other in the ancestral tree darting off as soon as it has captured something that it prizes. Experience has taught it to beware of marauders and it instinctively makes off with its capture as soon as it has seized it. But, accompanying this fear, there is a sense of joy in having come by its prize and in being able to retain possession of it by evading potential pursuers. As soon as one gets hold of anything desirable, the mere act of acquisition immediately suggests in the subconscious one's being despoiled of it, and one secures it by making off with it.

Exhilaration of Movement

But there are some kinds of Joy to which this analysis cannot be made strictly to apply. Among these is the sense of exhilaration that one experiences when in motion, the joy of the joy-ride. Little Sally being drawn in a packing-case on wheels over the cobblestones of our alley feels it no less than her more fortunate fellow-creatures whizzing through the cold, crisp air on skis or bobsleigh, or feeling the freshness of the open air on their cheeks as they speed through it in a car or a speed-boat.

Now it's quite clear that it's a sense of free movement that evokes this joy. Cause and effect have

changed places. Joy, as we have seen, produces movement; now movement produces Joy.

Joie de Vivre

Closely akin to the Joy of Movement is the Joy of Living, the *Joie de Vivre*. These beautiful Himalayas, the glorious October sunshine, the vast spaces that stretch away from one, away to the majestic snow-clad peaks in the storied distance—oh, the confused delight to be alive and in their midst! On wings of fancy one projects oneself into space and goes speeding through the air away to those great masses of nobility that sit there serenely in their incredible whiteness, knowing nothing of our raptures, accustomed, as they are, to all these things right through eternity.

In this, as in the first, there is an inversion of cause and effect. Joy is a will to Life. And yet a sense of Life and Living evokes Joy. Both phenomena are examples of the action of the same law—what I shall call the Law of Inversion, a law that all Karma is subject to.

If you were to look very attentively at the workings of your mind, you would find that the sense of life awakes the fear of being deprived of it, and the resultant will to life expresses itself in what appears as Joy.

Now a sense of movement is but one form of a sense of living and produces the same reactions.

Limb Movements in Joy

The impulse to be off that Joy evokes acting suddenly, brings into play muscles the use of which once promoted locomotion, but do so no longer. Such actions as leaping and capering, or hopping on one's toes and wringing one's hands, or bouncing up and down in a chair, or clapping one's hands, or thumping on something, or an infant's throwing out its limbs, are recognizable as actions prompted by the urge to do those things which ordinarily promote movement. It is true that we humans do not move on our hands, but we do not have to go far back in our pedigree to find ancestors that did use the counterparts of our upper limbs for that purpose. The sudden impulse to move stirs into activity old instincts.

Body Movements in Joy

There are other actions expressive of joy which are still to be considered: the child's action of wriggling its body, seen also in infants; the same habit of wriggling the body common in dogs, generally modified into a mere wagging of the tail. Now there is no doubt about it that this peculiar action is also an inherited instinct, being merely the sinuous action of the fish by which it propels itself forward. This is not as preposterous as it may appear at first; on the contrary, it is what one would

expect, that habits which have been so long and so constantly in use with fishes should be inherited in some form by their descendants. In fact reptiles, which are almost the next step in the evolutionary ladder, have a sort of sinuous action in all their movements. In mammals there is little or no trace ordinarily of sinuosity in movement, but the sudden impulse resulting from joy often, especially in the young, stirs up an old and forgotten habit. It will be noticed of lambs and kids when they frisk that they give their head and body sideward flexures,[1] the action being precisely the same as that of a fish in darting off.

Joy, the Fountain Head of Music, Dance and Song

Dancing, more especially what is known as classical dancing, is merely an elaboration of the spontaneous movements expressive of joy. Again, all instrumental music has been evolved from the action of savages of striking, more or less rhythmically, anything that will resound, the action being prompted by a sense of joy and being a variant of our habit of clapping. Song too has its foundation

[1] Apropos of this, we must take notice of the somewhat common habit of people, when running hard, as in a race, and out to make the utmost speed they possibly can, of throwing their head sideways as they run. In times of stress and excitement there is always a tendency for old habits, that are ordinarily recessive, to assert themselves.

in joy, growing out of those natural articulations which accompany delight. So out of the manifold actions that are prompted by an impulse to get away with what delights us has grown music, dance and song.

Cries of Joy

Perhaps the most remarkable part of the expression of joy is the vocal part of it: shouting, singing, a child's characteristic peal of delight, a baby's crowing, a dog's gleeful yowl. It may be thought that these cannot be shown to be actuated by an urge to get moving. But we have here one of Nature's greatest wonders.

When, in the course of evolution from fishes through amphibians to reptiles, birds and mammals, vertebrates took to dry land, they had no further use for gills. But the gill machinery did not fall into decay. It was modified by Nature's wonderful craftsmanship and put to a new use, and now forms the foundation of the vocal system of the descendants of the fish.

But allowing all this, it does not solve our problem. What connection can gills be shown to have with locomotion? Actually, a fish can and does use its gills to propel itself forward, although the use of the gills alone would not be sufficiently effective for propulsive purposes. It is useful

however, to note that, when from a state of rest a fish suddenly darts forward, it discharges water from its gills as part of the set of actions by which it gets moving. This action of the gills is the original of the note some birds utter at the commencement of flight. With mammals too a sudden impulse of movement from rest, as in joy or fear, is usually accompanied by a sound of some kind.

But the fact that the action of the gills is not sufficiently effective for locomotor purposes makes one suspect that the habit is inherited by the fish and not developed by it, and that the gills are really a modification of the locomotor system of some earlier form of life.

It is probable that this is the case; that the fish's gills have been evolved from the umbrella of the medusae.[1] If this is so, we have no difficulty

[1] *The method of swimming of the Hydromedusae is quite different from that of the Scyphomedusae. It is here that the object of the velum is seen. It has already been mentioned that the velum stretches across the mouth of the bell with a central aperture like an iris diaphragm. The pulsations of the medusa's bell are like the systole and diastole of the heart. When the medusa is at rest, its subumbrellar cavity is, of course, filled with water, being in direct communication with the outside through the aperture in the velum. When swimming, the bell contracts and the subumbrellar cavity is consequently diminished in volume and water expelled through the velar aperture. A jet is thus formed which drives the medusa through the water on the same principle as the rocket. The object of the velum is thus to diminish the area through which the expelled water can pass, and consequently increase the speed of the jet and increase the propulsive power.*

The School Science Review for March, 1939, p. 441.

in understanding why the urge to move, acting suddenly, makes a fish contract its gills and makes its air-breathing descendants produce a sound of some kind. This also explains the fact that the first efforts at movement of newly-born creatures produce cries: the squeaking and squealing of newborn puppies and kittens is not actuated by any urge to make themselves heard, but by that of movement. But they bring the wrong muscles into play. You might say that they turn the wrong handle, the one that once started the ship moving but which Nature has altered to connect with the siren.

The Primal Sound

The human vocal system is most complex and includes amongst other things the tongue, palate, teeth, lips and nose, all of which are used in one way or another to vary vocal sounds. But the further back we go in evolution, the simpler do we find the sound to be, until we find certain reptiles, amphibians and even fishes that are capable of producing only a single sound, which they do by the use of what we might call the gill muscles.

It is this primal sound produced by the muscles at the corner of the chin and throat (the hyoglossus muscles) that one harks back to in joy and that constitutes, in mammals and in birds, the heart of

all cries of delight. Sometimes one hears the sound in its essential purity in the little high-pitched notes that accompany a baby's gurgles of delight or when a child in an ecstasy of joy covers its face with its hands and produces by the force of its "gill muscles" a characteristic high-pitched note. It would be impossible to spell the sound in the Roman alphabet or any other, as it is not used in ordinary speech, and so there is no letter or combination of letters that could be made to stand for it. M is the only speech sound that is produced with the mouth closed and so comes nearest to it, but it is as much nearer than the other letters as the top of a hill would be nearer to the sun at midday than the base. When I require to refer to it, I shall represent it by this symbol :  [1]

[1] This may be taken to be a conventionalized drawing of a fish with the gills exaggerated (the part of greatest importance to our present subject) or, better, of a medusa and its umbrella In the arrow directed upwards we have a symbolism of the upward urge that finds expression in what the symbol stands for and of the latter's immense power for uplift, a power of which the sages of ancient India seem to have had a knowledge and the full extent of which we shall have to rediscover

Apropos of this I am tempted to make a remark which, I feel sure, the reader will find worth his consideration :

When I think, especially in this connection, how, in the course of evolution, habits are acquired which, in a "modified" form, prove to be of immense value and which otherwise would never have been acquired to that "modified" end, the conviction grows on me that we are looking at evolution upside down. In that case

It mingles with the ordinary human voice and, by giving it a characteristic ring, makes it musical, whereas its absence makes the voice dry and unpleasant. It is, in fact, as has already been said, the foundation of all song, of birds as well as of humans. The natural expression of delight, as it involves the use of the "gill muscles," exercises and strengthens them, and so produces a rich singing voice. Singing is very often a disguise of, and pretext for, the utterance of ↑. One feels like

our view of evolution would be much the same as if we were to hold that,

because (1) a baker leavens his bread,
therefore (2) it is "light" and,
therefore (3) absorbent of salivary and other juices,
therefore (4) easy to digest and,
therefore (5) wholesome (*pace* Dr. Hay and others)—

a view which would appear to be unexceptionable enough But is not the sequence of cause and effect the other way about? Which is first in time—in the mind of the baker—leaven, or wholesome food? Is it not

because (1) the primary desideratum is wholesome food
therefore (2) it is found necessary to provide something whose nutriment is readily assimilated and
therefore (3) it is so made as to facilitate the digestive processes,
therefore (4) "light",
therefore (5) leavened?

On this analogy may it not be possible that the highest embodiment of Life on this globe, Man, existed **before** all the lower forms—in the Consciousness that we call God and that the primary forms of Life (which are but the encrustation of Matter about that Consciousness) were but preliminary stages designed to evolve ultimately into that highest embodiment of that Consciousness?

breaking out in a peal of delight and the impulse finds satisfaction in a snatch of song.

Water Evokes Joy

Perhaps it would be well to advert here to that natural inspirer of song, the bath tub.

The joy that we experience when we are near or in the sea is a sort of throw-back to our piscine days. The impulse to repeat all the actions of the fish results in all the splashing and frolicking that are a familiar feature of the seaside, and the impulse to use the gills finds expression in screaming and shouting. The same impulses, in a milder form, are felt in the ordinary bath tub and explain the sounds of splashing and spluttering that mingle with the familiar bath melodies. Children splash unreservedly in their bath and punctuate the splashing with yells of delight.

ॐ—Aum

The shouts of joy of a child usually begin with an open dipthongal sound something like "a-oo," (both parts being very short—"syllabic instants," in fact) which runs into the "wordless sound," which is uttered very often with the mouth closed. This is the "Aum" referred to in the ancient scriptures of the Hindus. Very often it is the closed primal sound,  , that is had in mind in parts of those writings, although it is referred to as "Aum"

or "Om", ॐ. Thus in the *Mandalabrahmana Upanishad* we read :

Having united Prana and Apana and holding the breath in Kumbhaka,[1] *one should fix his concentration at the tip of the nose and making Shanmukhi*[2] *with the fingers of both hands, one hears the sound of Pranava in which Manas is absorbed.*

It is obvious, when the mouth and nose are so effectively stopped, that Pranava is not uttered through the mouth or nose. It is in fact produced in the head, as is clear from the following extract from the *Amrtanada Upanishad* :

Pranava travels through that path through which this Akshara goes. It is through the opening of the heart[3]*, through the opening of*

[1] Kumbhaka means "cessation of breath."

[2] Shanmukhi is said to be the process of hearing the **internal** sound by closing the two ears with the two thumbs, the two eyes with the two forefingers, the two nostrils with the two middle fingers, and the mouth with the remaining fingers

A child does the **essentials** of all this quite naturally when it covers its face with its hands in its joy and utters ↑.

[3] This is the "heart-leap" referred to by Wordsworth :

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.

There are two ingredients in the expression of Joy to which I have not adverted The first is this heart-leap · We shall have to know a good deal more about the origin and evolution of the most vital of all our organs before we can with any degree of satisfaction account for this reaction in Joy.

The second is the smile that overspreads the face in Joy : I shall refer to this in Chapter IX.

Vayu[1], *through the opening of the head, and through the opening of Moksha.*

Notice that the effect of the utterance of ॐ is that "Manas is absorbed" and that one obtains "Moksha," that is, liberation—of course, temporarily. One passes out of one's ordinary manasic consciousness and attains a higher consciousness or, as Milton puts it, one "dissolves into ecstasies which bring all heaven before one's eyes".

Now this is a common experience when one utters ↑ *sua sponte.* That it requires no imagination to see that one passes into another consciousness is evidenced by the fact that the state of mind at the time is spoken of as an "ecstasy" (literally, a "standing out of oneself") or a "delirium" of joy, or a "frenzy" of delight. Other words like "transport," "rapture," "being entranced," draw attention to the same fact.

Again in the *Bhagavad Gita* it is written:

All the gates closed, the mind confined in the heart, the life-breath fixed in the head, firm in yoga, "Om" the one-syllabled Brahma reciting, thinking upon Me, he who goeth forth, abandoning the body, goeth to the highest goal. VIII, 12, 13.

If the breath is fixed in the head, the sound is obviously produced in the head. Notice that all

[1] "Vayu" means air or breath, and the "opening of vayu" is certainly the throat.

the nine gates of the body, which include the mouth and nose, are closed. Then there is no doubt about one's "abandoning the body" in an Ecstasy inasmuch as the return to consciousness has often the same feel about it as waking from sleep or recovering from a swoon.

That ॐ does not contain any ordinary vocal sounds is clear from a passage in the *Amrtanada Upanishad* which runs :

That which never decays is Akshara (ॐ) which is without ghosha, consonant, vowel, palatal, guttural, nasal, letter R, and sibilants.

This pretty effectively rules out all ordinary vocal sounds. Earlier in the same Upanishad it says that one attains the **subtle** sound "without vowels or consonants."

There is no doubt about it that what is referred to as ॐ in the sacred books of ancient India is the head sound one utters in an ecstasy of delight. Somewhere in the two thousand odd years across which the wisdom of the ancients has come to us this truth with scores of others has been lost, and the word is now pronounced somewhat like "home" without the aspirate, or else it is pronounced "Aum" (the vowel part being made diphthongal).

That the pronunciation of any purely arbitrary sound like "ome" or "aum" can have no particular virtue will be obvious when we remember that

whatever expresses the divinity within us takes long ages to mature and must always come from within. The divinity within us is ever trying to manifest itself by means of vehicles which it has adapted to its use and whose development as expressions of divinity extends over measureless aeons. The greater the potency for good that anything possesses, the further afield must we go to find its beginnings. Remember those fine lines of Wordsworth :

The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar.

" And cometh from afar ". There is nothing really and truly great that does not come from afar. There is an anecdote about—I believe—Sir Walter Raleigh that well expresses this truth.

On one of his expeditions, it appears, Raleigh landed with his party at the mouth of a broad river—the Orinoco, if I remember correctly. While there he overheard one of his men remark to another that the expedition would probably be famous as having led to the discovery of a new island. Raleigh turned to the speaker and asked, " Do you think it possible for a river to grow to such a size on a small island ? Surely you can see that it comes from a very great distance and that we're on the edge of a large continent."

The Upanishads ascribe to Pranava very considerable virtues. It must, then, be present in us as a thing that has been developing for millions of years, for we know that whatever partakes of the divine must be cultivated from within and not grafted on from without. "The kingdom of God is within you." And so we must look for the utterance of Pranava as something coming from within and should expect to find it being uttered by people who know nothing of Hindu practice or even of the Hindus. Says the *Chhandogya Upanishad*:

Both those who are versed in this Akshara, and ***those who are not,*** *alike perform ceremonies through it.* I, 10.

Now there is no natural impulse to pronounce the word "Aum," but there is certainly a very natural impulse to utter ॐ, natural not only to human beings but also to a large part of the animal kingdom. One hears it being uttered by bird and beast, very seldom in its purity, being usually submerged in a mass of alien sounds, but none the less productive of good.

Joy and the Sense of Infinitude

We have seen that the utterance of Pranava has the virtue of lifting one out of oneself and "bringing all heaven before one's eyes." Let us see what exactly this expression means.

The free and unrestrained expression of Joy brings to us a sense of limitless space that we feel is ours. It is this sense of boundlessness that is of the nature of heaven. We can easily see how this sense develops. The greater the fish's sense of its ability to escape, the greater will be its pleasure. This pleasure reaches its zenith when its field of activity as far as it can see is its own without anything in it to cause the least dismay. A fish's field of vision is necessarily very limited and it would not require very much space unhampered by foreign entities to give it a sense of limitless freedom. Hence the experience is sufficiently frequent to ripen the development of this sense of boundless space belonging to itself in the mind of the fish, a sense which makes itself felt when we are free to express Joy without let or hindrance.

Let Joy be Unconfined

Now Joy, as we have seen, arises from a subconscious urge to make secure what one has found oneself to be in possession of or, in the case of the *Joie de Vivre*, to make secure one's own being. If this urge is repressed, the sense of one's security in the possession of life and all that one cherishes is incomplete. If a child's exuberance of joy is crushed, it produces most disastrous results which continue for the rest of life: a sense of having acquired

anything desirable produces a peculiar sensation of helplessness and impotence and a feeling that somehow Life (with a capital L) is not for him. He never really enjoys Life thereafter.

But if, on the other hand, a child is given every freedom to disport himself and shout to his heart's content, he feels that Life and everything that's in it does belong to him. As he grows up, with every new cause for joy he will experience the same urge to give himself up to wild ecstasy and he will feel at the same time that he has limitless freedom to do so.

Serenity

But he begins to see the illusion of it. He comes to realize that he is running away from a chimera; that no amount of running or leaping or shouting makes possession a whit the securer. And he yields up his exuberance of spirits, the manifestation of Joy being gradually refined down to a barely perceptible sparkle of the eyes.

But there is no inhibition or repression, from within or without, of this urge to Joy. Nor is there any excision or burning out of the urge from one's nature for all time. Every succeeding triumph will bring with it the urge to caper and sing, but, before one has got very far in the expression of it, one realizes how needless it is and yields it up, but with

one's sense of the security of one's possession quite as complete as if one had given oneself up to the wildest paroxysms of joy.

Free Expression of Joy Can Be at One with Perfect Serenity

So, although the urge to Joy—like all other natural urges—demands full and free expression, one can give it that full and free expression without its being noticed by those around one. By a process of refining the expression of Joy one can arrive at a stage where just a **thought** of doing what one feels an urge to do is sufficient to give expression to it. Even the utterance of  is reduced to just the slightest tightening of what I have called the "gill muscles" without any sound whatever being produced. And yet the benefits secured can be as full and complete as if one had indulged in a wild transport of Joy with all the attendant noise and movement. **Complete freedom of self-expression can be brought to coincide with perfect serenity.**

I say "can be" because one must clearly distinguish between the refining of self-expression to the point of intangibility (which is Dharma) and the inhibition of the urge (which is *Tamas*). How many people go through life with most of their natural urges inhibited! A sense of joy and the urge to give visible and audible expression to it immediately

conjures up a vision—subconscious for the most part—of one's society (by which I mean the mass of one's associates) ridiculing or otherwise deterring the action, and one immediately claps down the lid on one's ebullience.

Whether it is good for one to attempt to force through this inhibitory karma and express oneself despite oneself cannot be said without reference to the particular case. One **must** sooner or later, either in this or a succeeding life, find free vent for the urge. But one must do so only when things are opportune. So much is certain, the attempt to force such a passage **may lead to insanity**. This subject will be dealt with more fully in Chapter XIV.

CHAPTER VI

THE BREATH OF LIFE

IT would probably be true to say that there is not a single habit of the body or of any unit thereof that has not a karmic origin. In the course of this chapter we shall attempt to analyse the karma of that very vital habit—breathing.

In trying to discover its origin we must search for a period in our evolution when the act of breathing, or a physiological process of which breathing is an evolute, was one that was adopted consciously and deliberately in what I have called "compelling circumstances." We shall probably find that the end which the original action was made to serve was very different from that which the habit of breathing serves and that that action secured life in a more obvious way. In tracing the development of the breathing habit we shall at the same time be tracing the development of the lung, the breathing organ.

The Swimbladder and Its Use

It is a well-known fact that the lung is an evolute of the swimbladder of the fish. Now what is the use of this organ to the fish? Remember that part of the process by which the fish engulfs its meal is one of suction; and, as every schoolboy knows, suction is not a process of pulling, as if with a string. The fish, having seized its prey in its mouth, contrives to arrange things so that there is greater pressure from outside on the contents of its mouth than there is from the other direction. The pressure from outside depends on the surrounding water and can in no way be controlled by the fish. But it can vary the pressure from within itself. It so decreases this pressure as to make the pressure from without sufficiently greater to assist it materially in driving whatever it has in its mouth gradually down its throat.

It is this business of decreasing the pressure from within that is our immediate concern. It would be impossible for the fish to do this unless it had a certain amount of gas in itself apart from the solid and liquid matter of which it is composed. If by muscular energy it expands its own bulk, this gas—the air inside it, chiefly in the swimbladder—occupies a larger space and exerts less pressure in all directions, which is thus reduced to less than that of the surrounding water.

This is just what the fish wants in order to help its meal down its throat.

The process of suction is also used even when the fish wants to swallow quite a small thing. Watch the fishes in the Aquarium at feeding time and you will see that a fish approaches its food as it gradually sinks to the bottom of the tank, and, while it is still an appreciable distance away, suddenly sucks into its interior the food with, of course, a certain amount of water, which, no doubt, is immediately expelled. This is most easily observed in rock cod and sea perch, which are larger than the other fish in the Aquarium and whose movements are more leisurely. On one occasion, while I was watching a rock cod being fed, one of the dead fish that had been dropped into the tank sank to the bottom and settled in the sand in what seemed to me to be an awkward corner. I watched the cod approach it and was wondering how it was going to pick it up out of the corner when suddenly, while it was still quite three inches from the dead fish, it opened its mouth and the latter was swept into its maw.

It is possible that the swimbladder has another use for the fish, being a means whereby it can keep itself floating on the surface of the water or lying on the floor of its watery habitat. By being able to expand its bulk without increasing its weight it makes it possible for itself to float up to, and remain

on, the surface of the water. How the fish learns to do this is not very clear. I should suppose that it is just a matter of experience. It expands itself for other purposes and finds that it tends to rise every time it does this, and so it comes in course of time to learn to expand itself for the deliberate purpose of raising itself.

On the other hand, by compressing itself it increases its specific gravity sufficiently to keep it on the floor. A fish, hiding from its enemies in the sand or the weeds at the bottom of river, lake, or sea, would probably do this to keep itself down. We shall have occasion to look again at this habit of the first of the vertebrata.

But let us return to the fish's use of the swim-bladder as a means of disposing of its prey. As it is true that the fish habitually expands itself when tucking anything into its interior, we should expect to find that its descendant, man, would instinctively do something of the same kind when eating or drinking. And so he does. Particularly when really hungry or thirsty. The reader will no doubt have noticed how a thirsty person takes a deep intake of breath when swallowing down his first draught of water, exhaling audibly when he feels the liquid well within himself. A hungry person does the same thing when he gets his first mouthful of food. But, even in the ordinary way, in eating and drinking one

breathes in before one swallows and breathes out when one has finished swallowing. The reason why a person who is uncommonly hungry or thirsty takes a deeper breath at that first mouthful than one who is not is probably this: Hunger and thirst may be regarded as a struggle, and the greater the struggle, the greater does one's opponent appear to the subconscious mind; so, when that opponent is finally secured, the greater will be one's expansion to accommodate it.

Courage

The habit of expanding itself becomes a defensive one with the fish. It does one of two things when attacked: Either it makes off as fast as it can or, if it feels that it is a match for its aggressor, it prepares to devour instead of being devoured. To which end the first thing that it does is to expand itself. This sense, then, of one's own power and the impulse to dare comes to produce as a natural reaction in the fish this action of expanding itself, and this is bequeathed as a habit to all its descendants. Hence it comes about that man instinctively takes a deep breath when he plucks up courage for any struggle or task that faces him.

Self-Importance

The fish's reaction follows upon a sense of there being a threat to its own being. Now this sense can

be evoked by its realizing itself. When it does so, it senses, quite logically, the likelihood of something finding it a welcome prey, and this makes it automatically expand until by doing so it gives itself a sense of security, whereat it relaxes. This action has its counterpart in man: A sense of one's importance brings to one's subconscious mind the thought of others who would try to humble one; one might shrink from them, but it is just that sense of one's own potentiality that causes the characteristic "puffing up."

Sighs

The human sigh is somewhat akin to this. Sighs are associated in our minds with cares, worries, afflictions. But notice, as long as one is sitting hunched up, brooding over one's misfortunes, there is no impulse to sigh. The impulse comes only when a ray of light, however small, penetrates the darkness: one seems to see a way out; one lives in spite of overwhelming misfortunes. Or if one's mind wanders by chance into pleasant memories, or even if one is interrupted or one's mind is sidetracked in the midst of one's brooding or if one merely shifts one's position, the sigh follows. It seems as if anything that gives one a sense of one's own being causes the reaction. This sense awakens the hope of overcoming the enemy and one

subconsciously proceeds to do so in the fish's way of doing it.

There is what I might call the "desperate sigh," which is often accompanied by a sort of wail in expelling the air from the lungs. Even in this there is courage of a kind shown, a desperate courage. One sits to meals day after day with a man who eats his food in a very disturbing manner. But hope springs eternal in the human breast. Yet not **quite** eternal. One day one finds oneself heaving a sigh, and, if one were to look into one's mind, one would find that, despairing of the intruder disappearing of his own accord, one is tackling him at long last—subconsciously.

Aspiration

Closely akin to Courage is Aspiration. Notice the word "aspiration" —"breathing at"—there being two conspicuous features of Aspiration: the deep breath, and the mental act of aiming at something. The instinctive action of taking a deep breath that goes with, and signalizes, the psychological process that we know as Aspiration is so conspicuous as to give it its name.

Now if we analyse this process we find that it contains the following elements:

1. a sense of something outside oneself that one desires to draw into one's being;

2. a sense of one's power to do so.

And then one finds oneself instinctively expanding as if to accommodate what one aspires after. The subconscious mind cannot conceive of one incorporating anything within oneself without doing so physically.

Inspiration

Aspiration suggests **In**spiration. Observe that the synonym "afflatus" also draws attention to the instinctive action of taking a deep breath. In actual truth, it is the same sense of boundlessness or infinitude as that referred to on page 81 as evoking an ecstasy which in some cases evokes this karmic reaction of taking a deep breath. Whenever—as in a poetic ecstasy—one's consciousness contacts infinity, one reacts in one or both ways. A musician, then, or an artist, glimpsing that beauty which is of immortality and infinity, has an "inspiration" in both the literal and derived senses of the word.

This reaction is one that is brought about by the Law of Inversion. Now a fish, by disposing of an attacker, gives itself a sense of security, of being. But, by the operation of this law, a sense of being causes it to do the very thing which would secure it, namely, to expand. Hence it comes about that, in the human being, looking out upon infinity or upon a view which is free of any suggestion of

difficulty to one, one has that sense of being which causes a deep intake of breath.

The Sigh of Satisfaction

Since a fish, as soon as it secures its prey, expands itself for the purpose of accommodating its capture, the act of expansion comes to associate itself with a sense of having successfully completed its labours. Hence it follows that a sense of having crowned one's labours with success produces in man the reaction of heaving a deep sigh of satisfaction.

Getting Clear

Then there is the deep breath one takes when one "gets it off one's chest," or when one gets clear of a pursuer. It is the sense of being, of one's own existence, which, as we have already seen, evokes the reaction of taking a deep breath.

The Breathing Cycle

But this gives us a cycle, which, no doubt, tends to become a recurring one the further along the line of evolution the species of fish is that we are considering. By expanding, the fish gives itself a sense of security and of being. Whereat it relaxes. But this sense of being causes it to expand again, which starts the cycle afresh. And so it comes about that a regularly recurring cycle is established in

advanced species of fish, although it is not at first used for respiration. But the foundation is laid of the breathing habit of those species of fish that do breathe air, and so of amphibians and their descendants, who, in breathing, follow subconsciously the same mental cycle as originally caused the fish to expand itself and then relax. Every intake of breath is an act of self-preservation. It is the **breath of life** in very truth.

Swallowing

We have seen that the act of expanding itself was part of the process by which a fish engulfs its prey, another part of which is cognate with our process of swallowing. One would expect, then, that a deep breath would usually be accompanied by the other process. And so it is. Not only does one go through the action of swallowing, but, before doing so, the mouth draws saliva from the gums [1]. We go through the action of swallowing far oftener than we are aware. It makes itself noticed sometimes when we get the so-called "lump in the throat."

[1] We shall have to discover the origin, and trace the history, of the habit of drawing saliva from the gums, as also that of swallowing, with certainty and exactitude. The first of these two habits, which assists the digestive process, appears to have been in an earlier form (maybe, not the original) that observed in some reptiles of smearing their prey with a slimy substance produced in the mouth, the action being probably intended to assist the process of swallowing.

The sensation of there being a lump in the throat is caused by one's attempting to swallow when the throat and chest and one's frame generally are constricted with fear.

It is of interest to notice that there is a natural human instinct to represent all achievements in terms of swallowing—that is, swallowing something tangible: eating and drinking—as if there were a conviction somewhere in the mind that nothing is fully and definitely acquired until it is well within one's interior. If the thing achieved is of a nature that does not allow of its being swallowed—a university degree, for example—we go through the process of eating and drinking all the same by having a feed to celebrate the success, thus giving oneself the feeling of having fully and conclusively secured the thing in question. The instinct is a perfectly natural one, and the custom of feasting to celebrate a success has existed from time immemorial and will probably continue as long as man exists.

CHAPTER VII

LOVE

OF all the mysteries that we encounter in life there is none so profound as that contained in Love. This chapter does not pretend to be a solution of that mystery, but I firmly believe that the speculations here set forth, if followed up, will ultimately lead to that solution.

Love's Folly

I have said that whatever we do by Karma or instinct will always be found to be prompted by Illusion, the illusion always consisting in one's imagining oneself to be in conditions which do not exist, but which at one time **did** exist for one. That Love is born of, and subsists on, Illusion is a fact that has long been recognized: Shakespeare and the other poets speak of the tender passion as "fancy," "fantasy," "infatuation," "madness," etc. And is not Love commonly represented as being **blind**?

Of the nature of the illusion that is at the root of Love one cannot be long in doubt, because there is none that has been uttered with anything like the same frequency. Let us take a few samples of the forms which this illusion takes:

Romeo.

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east and ***Juliet is the sun.***

. . . .

Juliet.

Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the ***god of my idolatry.***

. . . .

Romeo (of Juliet).

It is ***my soul*** *that calls upon my name.*

. . . .

Helena.

It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are ***all the world.***

It is unnecessary to go on with these; the illusions that Love creates,—or, correctly speaking, which create Love—are familiar enough to everybody: almost every week a new song makes its appearance in which the old illusions reappear, tricked out in new guise. These illusions will be

found to include the following: that all light and life emanate from one's beloved; that the world would be empty without him or her; that, in fact, one's beloved **is** the whole world, nay, the entire universe; that he or she is one's heart or one's soul or life. Then there is the sense of sweetness that always associates itself with the object of one's affections.

Possible Origins of the Love Instinct

If we are to discover the origin of Love we must find when, where, and how, all this could be **literally** true. Because, in getting these ideas in one's mind, one is imagining oneself back in those conditions. In tracing the development of the Love instinct we shall also be tracing the history of sex.

The instinct, judging from its strength and the extent to which it fills one's life, appears to have its beginnings very far back in evolutionary development, probably right back in protozoic life. There are two things that still baffle us in the habits of the protozoa: In the first place, what makes two individual protozoa conjugate and fuse themselves in one? Secondly, what makes a protozoon divide itself in two and so produce two entities where before there was only one? We should rather put the second first, because it is the older habit. But it is the first that we are primarily concerned with here.

There appears to be no necessity for the act of conjugation, because multiplication by fission goes on independently of it; is, in fact, interrupted by that tedious and fatiguing process. But the important thing is that the creatures appear to conjugate only in certain circumstances, and our problem is to discover what those circumstances are. Remember that all instinctive habits commence in actions done deliberately and to a definite end, actions which are forced on one in self-preservation.

It would be a herculean feat to merge one's consciousness in that of a protozoon and see—or, rather, sense—life as it does. But we have what is probably an easier way of discovering what the incentive is that makes two protozoa fuse themselves in one. Amazing as it may sound, we can arrive at some approximation of the protozoic view of things by examining and analysing Love in its most rudimentary form—the sex urge—whenever it should enter into our consciousness.

A Perfect Union

It is well-known that there is in general no sex among the protozoa, but it is found that, when two conjugate, they are complementary to one another, "one being relatively large, with a good deal of cytoplasm in proportion to nucleus, provided with some store of nutritive material, and therefore

sluggish; the other being relatively small, with little cytoplasm in proportion to nucleus, and therefore disposed to move toward nutritive substances, to explore."[1] It is possible that a protozoon of the latter type, comparatively devoid of cytoplasm and in dire need of it, encountering one of the former type and with an ample store of it, has somehow a sense of the other being all that life means to it and attempts to project its being into it. At the same time, the other protozoon, supercharged with cytoplasm and incapable of movement, which it has a strong urge for, sees its ideal in the free-moving one and readily fuses its being with it. The two entities cease their existence as separate individuals and become one, in perfect union. Their nuclei break up and reassemble as one. Now, is the nucleus of the protozoa the original of the heart of the metazoa? And have we here two hearts **literally** becoming one?

In the process of conjugation each nucleus breaks up into chromosomes, which unite with those of the other to form one nucleus. Now, supposing the process is interrupted half way, that is, supposing a nucleus breaks up and is prevented from assembling with the chromosomes of the other: does the creature perish? And, if so, have we here the first, and very literal, instance of a "broken heart?"

[1] Prof. Patrick Geddes, *Sex*, p. 34.

Sweetness

It appears that one result yielded by experiments was that two unicellular creatures, otherwise suitable, if placed in a solution of sugar, readily conjugated. If there is any truth in this, it may have some connection with the sense of sweetness we associate with the object of our affections.

It seems to me to point to the following as probably true: that cytoplasm is sweet and that if a protozoon is supercharged with it, it is exuded into the surrounding water and attracts the free-moving protozoon which is comparatively devoid of cytoplasm and in dire need of it. It is its desire for this sweet substance that makes sweetness pleasant to it.

Warmth

The process of nucleus-division and cell-rearrangement that takes place as a preliminary to conjugation appears to be one that requires quite an expenditure of energy and, following a well-known law of physics, results in an increase of temperature. Have we in this an explanation of the warmth that is associated with Love?

In Every Cell

Remember, every one of us was a protozoon at one stage of this very life of ours. Every human body starts its existence as a unicellular organism, the

zygote. Every single cell of the body is an offshoot of that original cell and inherits some of its nature. Perhaps there is some connection between this and the sensation to which a lover gives expression when he (or she) says, "Every fibre of my being thrills with love for you."

All the World

It may be taken as certain that protozoa have only the merest glimmering of consciousness and certainly no such thing as memory or imagination, and it is only things in their immediate vicinity that enter into this rudimentary consciousness. We have no difficulty then in seeing how another microscopic creature like itself fills its entire world and is truly "all the world" to it.

Faint Glimmerings

I quite realize that all this sounds very fantastic. But I have already clearly intimated that this chapter consists far more of speculations than of any satisfactory conclusions arrived at. When I say "speculations," I do not mean random guesses made without consideration, but truths discerned faintly and in outline, like shapes seen in the first glimmering of dawn. I should like to have omitted this chapter until I could speak with more certainty about these things. But, as the theme of this book

is primarily the things we do as the result of our native, instinctive urges, there would be a conspicuous void in it if no reference were made to that urge which occupies so conspicuous a place in human nature. As if the urge were not strong enough in itself, man has created an immense mass of literature, art, song, and dance, to activate it still further. With the result that in this civilization of ours the urge and everything connected with it occupy a very large part of our lives.

Nor is this as regrettable as it may appear at first, in spite of the resultant evils. Because the urge, be it remembered, is one to project one's being outside oneself, or, looking at it from another angle, to fuse oneself with the life outside oneself. And this is all to the good.

The Terror That Is in Love and Beauty

This urge to include things outside oneself in one's own being is the basis of what is known as the aesthetic sense, the sense of the beautiful. Like every other urge, it has fear behind it as a driving force, a fact that both Milton and Wordsworth divined. In *Paradise Lost* we have these striking words:

> *Not terrible, though terror be in love*
> *And beauty.* IX, 490-1

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth quotes Milton and shows himself to be in agreement with him.

Now let us scrutinize this "terror" closely. A sense of beauty in anything is always a sense of Life in it, nay, a sense of the Imperishable about it. But at the same time there is a sense of its being fleeting and impermanent, and also a peculiar sense of its being unique. That is, although it is Life—Life that knows nothing of death or mortality—it is impermanent as far as oneself is concerned, something that has made its appearance within the compass of one's being but which the next moment may be gone for ever. From this results the urge to make sure of it and to hold it. Hence, whereas a sense of Joy results in quick movements, a sense of Beauty or of Love produces reactions suggestive of holding, clutching, retaining possession. One clasps one's hands to one's breast, pressing them to one as if one were trying to prevent something from escaping. One often clasps the thing itself if it is tangible and otherwise allows of it.

But there are other ways in which we try to hold what we regard as impermanent. We carve the lineaments of a beautiful face or body in marble; we attempt to hold the colours of a landscape or sunset by fixing them on canvas; or the wonderful wizardry of the composer translates the mute beauty that he finds around him into music that he can reproduce at will when the original that inspired it is no more. In every case the urge behind the

so-called "creative" instinct of the artist is that of making permanent the impermanent. Poor marble! poor canvas! the beauty of which they catch but a shadow will still be when they have long withered into dust and oblivion. Physical beauty is but a reflection of spiritual beauty, just occasional glints of the glory of that Spirit, which is universal and deathless.

A clear understanding of the "terror" that is in Love and Beauty helps to solve the problems attaching to some of the puzzling phenomena of life.

In the first place it explains why a youth does not ordinarily fall in love with his own sister, however charming others may find her. The "terror" which springs from the sense of impermanence cannot find any place in his consciousness.

It explains too why scenes whose beauty rendered one spell-bound when one first gazed upon them come to appear commonplace and uninteresting when they have become familiar. We say that familiarity has staled them. But this explanation is as inaccurate as it is clumsy. Staleness connotes deterioration. Deterioration of what? Certainly not of the scenes themselves, because we cannot but admit that they are exactly the same to-day as when they first burst upon our view. It might be said that one's aesthetic appreciation has become dulled. But that too is untrue. We find that we can still

be thrilled by beauty when we meet it in fresh forms. The true explanation is that with repeated and recurring experience of a thing the sense of its impermanence fades away and it is with the disappearance of this that one ceases to experience the thrill that it gave one formerly.

Incidentally, this explains also why the "glory and the dream" fades away in the full light of manhood, the disappearance of which Wordsworth so exquisitely deplores. The sense of impermanence of those things that thrilled one in childhood finds no place in manhood, and it is for this reason that they do not thrill one as they did in years gone by.

Sex-Poise

The *dhammachakka* or *dharma-chakra* that enables one to establish poise with respect to the sexual urge is not very easy to conceive and is still harder to describe. It appears to be a consciousness of one's indissoluble unity with, and inseparability from, the object of the urge, a consciousness of all created life being a continuum, Life that is shoreless and without time. The urge arises, as we have seen, in a mistaken sense of the impermanence and uniqueness of the object of one's love and is an impulse to fuse one's being with it. But in the consciousness of our oneness with Life the "terror" dissolves, and with it the urge.

It will be noticed that I have used the expression "sex-poise" instead of another word which suggests itself, "chastity." But I deliberately avoid that word because it has a connotation which does not coincide with what I have in mind. Chastity suggests to the mind rather the circumstance of having avoided giving expression to the sex urge than that dharma wherein one finds poise with respect to the sex-karma. The two need not be the same.

In the first place there are people who are perfectly chaste in the sense of never having had actual sexual contact with another but who have **never** known sex-poise. With them the sex urge has just been pinioned and gagged. Karmically, they are in no better position than if they had given the urge free expression, because the momentum of the karma has in no way been lessened by its repression.

But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. *Matthew*, V, 28.

In fact, if anything, Karma appears to gather strength by being dammed up, and when it does find an opening, whether in this life or a succeeding one, it is found to have lost none of its strength. The story of Susan Spray must be admitted to be true to human nature.

On the other hand there are people whose life has not been chaste in the accepted sense of the term and yet who have come to know sex-poise. It must be understood that this dharma, like every other, is not a thing which, once established, is secure in one's possession ever after. But it goes without saying that every time we establish Dharma or Poise we make it easier to recover our balance when next we are thrown off it.

Sex-poise must not be acquired at the expense of Love. There is a chastity that is bleak and cold, that detaches and isolates, by filling one's mind with a detestation, or at least a scorn, of sex, or by treating the sex urge as in its nature evil and base. Or one counters sexual attraction by directing one's attention to the failings and weaknesses of its object. This is not a sacrifice of karma, but the substitution of one karma for another.

But there is a chastity which arises from a greater love and not a diminution of it; rather from a higher Love, which is a yielding up of the love that is born of Karma. This higher Love is to the lower what Strength is to Endeavour; what Skill is to Assiduity; what Wisdom is to Knowledge. There is no word for it in the English language; expressions such as "divine Love," "divine Compassion," have been used to describe it and are the best we have at hand, having so much truth in them that

they point to its divine essence, since it proceeds from that divine principle in all of us which is ever conscious of the essential unity of this creation and the indissoluble kinship of all creatures herein.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FEAR OF GOD

WE are all familiar with the expression, "paralysed with fear", and most of us have had at some time or other the experience of that remarkable state. Its most conspicuous features are the utter inability to move from the position in which the fear has caught one (we speak of people being "transfixed with horror") and of utter speechlessness ("my tongue clove to my palate" is how some describe the experience). One observes also a tendency of the knees to give—they "turn to water;" they seem to lose their strength altogether, with the result that one sinks in a cowering attitude to the ground or else the effort to prevent this causes one's legs to tremble or, as the expression puts it with some exaggeration, makes one's "knees knock together." In either case one's knees are flexed to a greater or less extent. There is also a tendency to flex the arms: the hands are raised in an attitude of supplication or as if in self-protection, or just raised involuntarily without any

seeming motive in the action. There is a sense of constriction about the chest causing the breathing to be short, quick and difficult and the heart to palpitate; this is often accompanied by a sensation in the stomach akin to nausea. The mouth gapes and the eyes tend to bulge. There is, as we have seen, general immobility, which is very marked, and after which the condition is named, that of being "paralysed with fear."

The Original of Human Fear-Paralysis

Now all these reactions were deliberate actions at one stage of evolution and all served a very definite and useful purpose. I have said that an animal when threatened with danger either makes off with all possible speed or, if it feels that it is a match for the enemy, comes to grips with it. But it may do neither of these. It may just "lie low," particularly if it finds the other immeasurably stronger and too inconveniently near and feels that escape by flight is impossible, and if it trusts to cover or protective colouring to remain unobserved. The habit is traceable rather far back in evolution, being certainly in use among certain kinds of fish and being somewhat common among reptiles of the chameleon type. On one occasion when I had surprised a chameleon, I took the opportunity to observe carefully what it did. When I noticed it

moving about a bush, it was already a vivid green and, as I approached, it became suddenly aware of my presence and seemed to have become transfixed in the position in which it happened to be at that moment. By pressing its sides in, it flattened itself as much as it could—to try and look like a leaf, I thought. There was a gentle breeze and occasionally a slight movement of the leaves of the bush, and, whenever this occurred, the chameleon would sway itself slightly with the leaves. It seemed to have projected its eyes partly out of their sockets and kept me continually under observation. In fact, as I went round about it to watch it from different angles, it was only its eyes that I could see moving at all.

It seems to me that in this action of the chameleon we have an explanation of the human condition of being "paralysed with fear." I do not say that this is the original habit or that humanity is to be regarded as being descended from the chameleon, but that we have in common with the chameleon a creature somewhere in our ancestral tree which had developed the habit of remaining perfectly still in circumstances such as those described and the power and habit of changing its colour to one in keeping with its surroundings. It is possible that the human habits of blushing and blanching are lingering traces of the latter.

The Inclination to Sink down and to Raise One's Hands

Now let us look again at each of the factors of human Fear-paralysis. The tendency to flex the legs and arms is readily explained, being merely an evolute of the animal's tendency to crouch and take advantage of whatever cover is at hand. So strong is that tendency that the effort to withstand it has the effect of making the knees tremble.

Speechlessness

The inability to utter a sound, "being struck dumb with terror," is in line with the above. There would be a tendency on the part of the animal to suppress any sound that would be likely to betray its presence. This same tendency, asserting itself in the human, is the cause of one's becoming inarticulate.

The Sense of Constriction in the Chest and Throat

The sense of constriction in the chest requires particular notice. It may be traced to the action I have already mentioned of the chameleon of attempting to flatten itself. But it is probable that the chameleon's habit is itself an inherited one and is traceable further back in evolution and that it has its origin in the action of fishes of compressing themselves in order to keep themselves

down on the floor of the sea or river amongst the weeds or under the sand where they hide.[1] In the human being this constriction prevents the lungs being inflated to their full capacity. The ribs press on the heart, making its action difficult and producing the sensation of "the heart beating against the ribs." There is also a sense of constriction in the throat resulting in the so-called "lump in the throat" when one attempts to swallow—or, rather, to go through the actions of swallowing.

An Analysis of the Complex that Accompanies Fear-Paralysis

Examine the contents of the animal's mind in conditions such as would produce these reactions. They include:

1. a consciousness of the very near presence of something immeasurably more powerful than itself, from which it seems impossible to escape by running away;
2. a sense of being unobserved;
3. an overwhelming fear;
4. a hope that, if it "lies low," it will escape being molested.

Devotion is "Lying Low," Subjection

Now let factor 4 develop, hope turning gradually into confidence. In developing, it does so at the

[1] See p. 88.

expense of factor 3, which diminishes in proportion, as the former grows. And so we get that complex that makes an animal or human being cower at the feet of power with a hope, which amounts more or less to confidence, that it will be spared, and with so much the less fear. With these changes in the contents of the mind there are corresponding changes in the physical reactions. With the diminution of fear there is less of a tendency to keep the other under observation, less of the wide-eyed expression. Less also of the sense of constriction.

The instinct to prostrate—or, in a modified form, to bow—before authority is a very natural one. The urge to "lie low" becomes one of not rising against power, of subjecting one's will to that of authority. Subjecting oneself completely to the other's will is but one way of lying low: opposition to the other would be making oneself observed by him. In this we have the seed of Obedience.

Now it is easy to see how there develops in the mind a haunting sense of the presence of a power hovering somewhere in the offing and a tendency to regard everything inexplicable that befalls one as proceeding therefrom. And so we get the beginnings of religious dread—the fear of an unseen power, to whose agency everything that happens in life for which we cannot find an explanation is ascribed—

and a resultant urge to propitiate that power. This is refined into Devotion, Religious Awe, as fear diminishes and the sense of confidence in this unseen power to protect and not to hurt grows. Out of this develops that most valuable human instinct, stronger in some than in others, as a result of which one's mind is filled with a sense of the omnipresence of a Being of immeasurable power, but of perfect *Ahimsa* and benignity. This sense of an all-pervading Presence of ineffable benignity has an immense power for good, because, if one has a habit of mind that looks outward and sees benignity and kindness, one tends to have a sense of the kindness in those around one, one's fellows; and the awareness of this all-pervading Presence nurtures a sense of the solidarity of mankind—in fact, of created life generally—and stirs one to "good works." One seems to sense the existence of that Presence somewhere behind all that one encounters in life, including the halt, the blind and the lame, a Being in whom one sees benignity and clemency provided one subjects one's will to His. Hence the religious urge to minister to the needs of the needy, identifying them in a way, as one does subconsciously, with the Being in whose power one finds oneself. This produces those great and beautiful works of service such as religious societies and religious people devote themselves to.

Instinctive Actions in Devotion

The natural physical reactions which the devotional instinct evokes have a close resemblance to those which are produced by dread. Prostrating before the symbol of divinity is a devotional act common to many religions, the arms and legs being folded under the body in much the same way as those of an animal crouching. Prostration does not form part of Christian worship, but the Christian attitude of devotion will easily be seen to be only a modification of it. The pictures of the "Infant Samuel" and the "Weeping Magdalen" represent people, moved by awe of the Almighty, in attitudes which are devotional according to the Christian conception. The legs are folded to a kneeling position, and the arms folded fairly close to the body. It is the same as the attitude of prostration with the only difference that the trunk has not been brought into a horizontal position.

Respect

A further modification of this is the gesture of respect made to one's superiors. This varies with different races. With some, Respect is shown by such actions as raising one's hat, or bowing, or curtseying, or making an obeisance. In India the traditional way of showing respect is salaaming or doing "namaskar," that is, raising one or both hands

to the head or breast and at the same time bowing slightly.

All such gestures will be seen to be an expression —sometimes much disguised—of the natural urge to flex the limbs and incline the body from its vertical position, which is a karmic reaction to the sense of being in the presence of power.

CHAPTER IX

TEARS AND SMILES

MONKEYS, especially young ones, have a strange habit when seized by anything They dread. They

1. make a peculiar grimace,
2. set up a chattering outcry,
3. make convulsive movements of the limbs, and
4. void from their bowels whatever offensive matter they can on their captor ; generally, too, the outside of the mouth and nose will be found to be covered with slaver and mucus.

The habit is by no means peculiar to monkeys, but has been noticed, with slight modifications, among other mammals. Whether it originated with mammals or was developed earlier in the evolutionary scale has yet to be discovered. At all events, each of the factors in this composite reaction to a sense of being in the grip of something powerful and hostile can be seen to have a very definite purpose. This is especially true of the fourth factor.

The habit, once it has become karma and been passed on to successors in the line of evolution,

tends, like all Karma, to come into operation in circumstances in which the particular reaction serves no apparent purpose. Hence we find that, amongst humans, especially the weak, a great fear seizing one produces this reaction or parts of it.

Tears

It is my belief that tears are only a refinement of the fourth factor in the reaction. It may be objected that tears do not appear to have any part in the monkey's reaction. But, for that matter, very young infants do not shed tears when they cry—a fact that is commonly observed and generally regarded as an indication that the child has only been pretending to cry. Yet, although the infant does not shed tears, its reaction will usually be found to be a closer approximation to the original, described above. Baby generally succeeds in messing himself or, at the least, wetting himself; and he slobbers.

It is probable that, in both the monkey and the human infant, there is some slight activation of the lacrymal glands, not sufficient however to cause an overflow of tears. But, as the other factors in the reaction come under control, the lacrymal reaction is allowed to become stronger. In its most refined form the reaction consists only of tears that well up silently and without anything else to signal the motions of the spirit.

Concomitants of Tears

In a child that has passed the stage of babyhood there is tendency, when it is seized with a fit of crying, to sink to the ground or throw itself on the ground and assume either a sitting posture or else lie more or less face downwards with the head resting on an arm which has been thrown forward. With grown-ups there is a somewhat similar tendency, that which is expressed in throwing oneself forward on to a table or against another person, and weeping with one's face in one's arm, which has been thrown forward on the table or rested on the other person. Children often work their legs alternately, and sometimes their arms too, the action having the appearance of their trying to free themselves from something imaginary. If a child in this condition is taken hold of by anyone, it kicks and struggles violently to get free.

There seems to be no doubt that the reaction of which tears form a part is an evolute of the monkey's reaction to a consciousness of being in the grip of something hostile against which its powers of resistance are felt to be unavailing.

Hopelessness and Despair

Now in Hopelessness and Despair there is just the same feeling, although the hostile entity against which one finds one's powers unavailing may not be

anything corporeal. It may take a multiplicity of different forms: poverty, friendlessness, oppression, to mention only a few. But it is important to note that, often, it is we that give each of these things their character of hostility by the simple act of ourselves adopting an attitude of hostility towards them. A condition of things that one might regard as adverse another welcomes with open arms. What is poverty to one is to another freedom from encumbrances; the friendlessness that X deplores is to Y the glorious state of having no one to come butting in when what he longs for more than anything else is to be left alone with his own thoughts.

Grief

We have seen that tears result from a sense of being in the grip of something powerful and hostile from which escape by flight seems impossible. By a natural extension of the stimulus the reaction follows if hostile strength should seize or fall upon anyone very near oneself. If two people set upon each other in grim combat, children who happen to be near immediately start crying. But others, seeing the struggle from some distance, turn and run. The distance is sufficiently great to preclude the possibility of their regarding escape as impossible.

To some there will appear to be no difference between the stimulus that provokes laughter and that which produces tears. On page 53 it was said that laughter was provoked by a subconscious sense of someone near oneself being downed by something strange. And now it is said that the same thing produces tears. But there is an important, though seemingly small, difference: In the case of the former there is also a sense of the danger not being very great and—in the original, as the animal sees it—there is the possibility of chasing it off by barking; but here that element is absent, and the danger that has suddenly loomed up appears as terrible and incapable of being overcome and at the same time inescapable. Of course, it is easy to slip from one phase of thought to the other. Laughter and Tears are in adjoining rooms, with an open door between them—*Lachen und Weinen in einem Sack*, says the German proverb. Thus we get the familiar and somewhat puzzling phenomenon of a hysterical person weeping and laughing alternately.

But, to return to our subject, since tears result from a sense of something powerful and hostile seizing someone near oneself, it is easy to see why the same reaction follows when the hostile, insuperable power is Death. This is not just a metaphor: in the subconscious, Death is always seen as inflicted by something malignant and all-powerful.

The nearness, again, need not be one of linear measurement. It may be one of kinship, association, or interest.

Sympathy

It may also be one of affinity of nature, or seeming affinity of nature. Thus we get tears of Sympathy. The person afflicted may be someone quite unknown to one—may, furthermore, be entirely a fiction—but one feels an affinity of nature with him which brings him near to oneself.

Tears at Parting

When someone near and dear is parted from one, as when he goes away by train or boat, especially if the parting is for an indefinite period, it appears to the subconscious as death. Hence we have the tears that are a familiar sight on railway platforms and the quayside.

Pain

Pain is one of the many things that produce tears. All pain is regarded subconsciously as inflicted by something hostile.

But there is one phenomenon in this connection that should be noted and which calls for a painstaking analysis of the tear complex. It is this: Pain, even severe pain, does not appear to be enough by

itself to produce tears. People have been known to bear up stoutly with afflictions—misfortune, penury, disgrace, and the rest of the "thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to"—without a tear or a murmur. But as soon as any one has shown them kindness and true sympathy in their trials, it has opened the floodgates of their tears.

This is true not only of grown-ups. I was told of a girl of about seventeen who was involved in a motor accident with several other people. She, with the others who were injured, was taken to hospital and attended to. Her injuries were not serious and she was allowed to go home. Only when she saw her mother and burst into uncontrolled weeping in her arms was it noticed that till then she hadn't shed a tear.

The same thing is true of even young children. A child will often suffer pain—for example, from a fall—without a whimper, but start crying as soon as it meets its mother.

People explain this by saying that the subject was too dazed, or too confused, or too frightened, to cry. But such an explanation comes of superficial observation and does not go to the root of the matter. In the case cited above, if the mother had been present at the accident, the injured girl would certainly have done her crying then.

Now, in all Karma, in the subconscious mental complex [1] from which it proceeds, there is one element always present—HOPE. Looking at the original action which, in its constant repetition, set that particular karmic eddy circling, one sees that it was adopted because it was seen as an avenue of escape from a situation that was found to be painful. So when we come to the karmic form of the habit, unless the subconscious sees in that action an avenue of escape from its fear—that is, in the absence of "**hope**"—there is no incentive to take it.

But, should a person do the very thing that that karma would have aimed at, the "hope" that had hitherto been absent suddenly appears, and the karmic reaction immediately follows. In the subconscious, the other person's action is seen as having resulted from one's own action—which, it imagines, had been taken—and, as Karma tends to repeat itself, the action is repeated to make sure of that result.

In the original, the action was taken to make the captor release its hold, to relent. But, by Inversion, a subconscious sense of being in the bosom of the relenting and compassionate produces that very

[1] I use the word "complex" in a sense somewhat different from that which it has in Psychoanalysis It is used here to designate the mental picture in the subconscious, the group of things which the subconscious envisages.

action—or, what is the same thing to the subconscious, its evolute—as an effect of itself. In the light of this we shall be able to understand the so-called tears of joy.

Tears of Joy

Here are a few examples of the stimuli that produce " tears of joy."

1. An Italian lady, who has been abroad for some years, returns to her native Florence. She is met at the station by her mother, all love and tenderness. At sight of her the young lady overflows in copious weeping.

2. A Japanese gentleman, also an exile for some years from his homeland, hears the strains of the Japanese national anthem on the radio. He is found to be weeping.

3. A person is reading an account of a ship that has been driven by a storm on to some rocks, against which it is being pounded, threatening to break in pieces at any moment. The skipper finds that it is impossible to launch the ship's boat, and he realizes that it is equally impossible for the lifeboat to put out from the shore, not far distant. He is at his wits' ends, when his eyes light on his Newfoundland dog, his constant companion ashore and afloat. An idea occurs to him. He shows the dog a rope and indicates by signs and speech that he wants it to

take one end of the rope to the men that can be seen on shore. The noble animal seems to understand, looks round at those present, and taking the rope in its mouth, plunges into the sea.

The reader finds his eyes suffused with tears.

Now, in all cases of this kind, there is a sense of affinity and sympathy, even tenderness, in another. The subject—that is, the person in whom the karmic reaction appears—need not be consciously in peril of any kind. But there is always at least a subconscious fear of some kind; if nothing else, the usual "misbelieving and black horde of fears and sorrows that infest the soul." The stimulus has undergone an important change as between that which produced the original reaction and that which produces its evolute, "tears of joy." The very full consciousness in the original of being in the grip of fear has in the evolute been reduced to an imperceptible subconsciousness of the same thing. On the other hand, the original slight hope of the other's relenting in response to the action which the animal is prompted to take has become, in the stimulus that produces the modified reaction, a full assurance of that relenting.

Bringing Up

There is a group of human reactions which are next door to those we have been considering. They

have an origin which, although quite different, has some resemblance to that of the latter.

Darwin has recorded that on one occasion, when he came suddenly upon a snake that had just swallowed a frog, it appeared alarmed, disgorged the frog, and slid off. Incidentally, the frog too hopped off, apparently none the worse for its experience.

Now it is easy to see that the snake would have a very definite—and, possibly, conscious—purpose in this action, and that the action was probably not an isolated one, but part of a well-formed habit. Reptiles, that engulf their prey whole and entire, often render themselves quite helpless as a result of having had a meal. It seems right to assume that, if they should be alarmed when in that condition, they would endeavour to disgorge the contents of their stomach as the only way of escape from their helplessness in the presence of danger. And evidently, from Darwin's observation, they seem to have no very great difficulty in doing so.

But such a habit, once formed and transmitted to the descendants of the reptile, may provide rather a puzzle for observers, especially when applied to what we might call "parallel circumstances," that is, conditions which are really different but have a fancied resemblance to those which produced the original reaction.

The reaction itself may be modified and produce, instead of vomiting, just retching. This may be modified still further and manifest itself simply as qualmishness, nausea. Reduced still further, it is felt only as a disinclination for food, or just a sense of distaste.

Alarm

It is the experience of most people that a sudden alarm or a sense of impending disaster has made them feel sick on the stomach. People have been known actually to vomit as a result, especially if the state of alarm is sustained for some length of time.

Now such a state of alarm may be created for the subconscious by one's being on anything that seems to be constantly giving way under one. We have an all too familiar example of this on board ship; and the more the ship pitches and tosses, the stronger is the stimulus. Notice that it is when the ship is sinking under one that the nausea is most keenly felt; when it begins to rise again, there comes some measure of reassurance and of recovery from the feeling of nausea. But in a moment the ship begins again to go down into the sea, and again there comes that "sinking feeling." Until finally...

The same reaction—in one form or other—is also produced by an aeroplane, an earthquake, a lift, a swing, and even a moving vehicle, especially on a

winding mountain road. In all these cases, although one knows quite well that there is no danger whatever, the subconscious scents it and produces the karmic reaction.

Experience, however, serves to correct this illusion, and the reaction does not follow in the case of those who are " used to it."

Disgust

It is not only being on something unstable that creates the subconscious alarm, but anything that to the subconscious appears as evidence of the presence somewhere near by of an animal of which it has reason to be afraid. In the conscious mind of the wild creature such alarm would be created by seeing the remains of an animal that has been partly devoured, or any part of an animal's body that has been severed from the rest of it, or fresh excrement, expectoration, or anything that has come from another animal, or even such evidences as the grass being pressed down or the smell hanging about a cave or lair that show that some creature has recently used it as a covert or den.

From this comes the human karmic reaction of qualmishness at the sight of similar things, of gaping wounds or even fresh blood. One finds pleasure in looking at beautiful fingers, but one of them, severed from the hand, would cause deep revulsion.

So also does the mutilated hand on the living body, even long after the place where the finger was severed has healed up. For that matter, so does an ugly scar, particularly if the disfigurement be on the face. Disgust is felt at the sight of the other things mentioned in the preceding paragraph. With most people the reaction of disgust in a milder form is extended to those things belonging to another with which his person comes ordinarily into close contact or which plainly show traces of having been used by him—his clothes, special chair, etc. It is even evoked by things belonging to oneself which show too plainly traces of use.

Cleanliness

But all this is not without its advantage, as it provides the motive force behind all the trouble that man takes to remove out of sight all those things that he finds at all offensive. Thus we get the human instinct for Cleanliness, which, reinforced by training, example, and a knowledge of the laws of hygiene, produces scrupulous cleanliness in one's person and surroundings.

Smiles

A smile is commonly regarded as being a modification of a laugh, a sort of half-laugh, a laugh that is not given full expression to. But not all smiles

are half-laughs. In fact, we use the word "smile" for quite a variety of facial expressions which have a strong resemblance to one another, but a resemblance which is nevertheless only superficial. We cannot even call it a family resemblance, since they do not belong to the same family, having quite independent origins.

The only smile that may be regarded as a half-laugh or—which is not quite the same thing—the refinement of a laugh, is the smile which is evoked by the same stimuli as would, in a stronger form, produce laughter. Let us call it the smile of Amusement, although we shall use this expression for smiles which are not caused by amusement in the strict sense of that word—smiles, for example, which are caused by gentle tickling.

Now, in the smile of Amusement, as I have said, we have a kind of mild laugh as a reaction to a mild stimulus. If the stimulus were stronger, we should have a laugh, full and hearty. But there are smiles of other kinds which never become laughs, however strong the stimulus may be. We greet a friend with a smile. If we feel very friendly towards him, we may greet him with a beaming smile. But, however strong the sense of friendliness may be, it never makes one laugh at him.

Again, a smile of satisfaction may become a broad smile if one is very pleased with oneself, but never

becomes a laugh, however much to one's liking one finds the world to be. A cynical smile, if intensified, becomes a sneer, not a laugh.

There are, in fact, as we shall soon see when we come to examine each of them, fundamental differences in these smiles, looking at them even in their physical aspect. Allow yourself to smile from a sense of amusement—by imagining, say, a comic situation—and, holding that smile on your face, try and imagine yourself greeting a friend with the same smile. We shall have the same consciousness of things being disturbingly out of place if we tried to interchange smiles of other kinds with their respective stimuli—the cynical smile, for example, with the smile of satisfaction.

Amusement

The smile of Amusement is undoubtedly just a mild sort of laugh, mild because the stimulus is a mild one.

The stimulus may be mild in many ways. You are going along a street, let us say, and, while you are passing a group of young fellows, one of them steps on a banana skin and, after doing an evolution or two, comes to rest on the pavement. His companions burst into explosions of mirth. But you smile. The reason is that the sense of " nearness " [1]

[1] See p. 55.

is not as strong for you, a complete stranger, as it is for his companions and intimate associates. If the young men were to belong to quite a different race to you, especially if it happens to be a race towards which you have no very kindly feelings, you would not even be moved to smile.

The stimulus may also be mild because of the fear element being mild. This may be due to there being an absence of "surprise." A joke that one has heard before may produce a smile, even if it fails to make one laugh a second time.

The mildness of the fear element may also be bound up with one's personal character. In which case the smile is a refinement of laughter and an approximation to what I have called "laughter-poise," [1] which comes of a complete absence of the fear element.

Let us examine the smile of Amusement in its physical aspect. The corners of the mouth are drawn outward and, to some extent, upward. Sometimes, but not always, the lips are parted and the upper teeth exposed to a greater or lesser extent. Even if the lips are not parted, there is always a tendency for the mouth to be opened slightly in that the lower row of teeth is separated from the upper. Sounds are produced through the nose which are best described as "voiced" sniffs—generally two in

[1] See p. 59.

quick succession. If they are more, there is always at the same time a tendency for the mouth to be opened wider and for the sounds to be emitted through the mouth. In which case the smile becomes a chuckle, which is nearer a laugh than a smile.

There is seldom only one of these "voiced sniffs." A tendency in the direction of modification is expressed in decreasing, not their number, but their strength. They are modified into a barely perceptible action of the chest which produces no audible sounds, but would do so if it were stronger.

The Cynical Smile

The cynical smile has this remarkable characteristic that distinguishes it from smiles of other kinds that, oftener than not, it affects only one side of the mouth. Often it is nothing more than a curl-up of the lip so as to bare the canine tooth on one side, and is then seen to be closely related to the expression of face associated with Pride.[1]

The cynical sneer and the animal's snarl are akin in more than their nomenclature. The animal's snarl is, in fact, the original of the human sneer. With the sneer there is always a tendency to turn the face slightly upwards and away from the person that one sneers at, and to look down at him. At the same time one utters a "voiced sniff," which is

[1] See p. 19.

nothing else but a vestigial snarl. The whole action is indicative of a sense of the smallness of the object of one's sneers.

Satisfaction and Pleasure

The smile of Pleasure, which is the same as that of Joy referred to earlier,[1] has one or two important features that differentiate it from smiles of other kinds. In the first place, the corners of the mouth are drawn outwards, but generally not upwards ; the mouth is broadened without there being the tendency to raise the upper lip so as to expose the teeth. Then, whereas in the smiles of Friendliness and Amusement, there is a tendency to open the mouth by parting the upper row of teeth from the lower, in this smile the inclination is rather to bring them more firmly together and sometimes even press them together almost to the extent of clenching the teeth. A third and very important feature, which is absent from other smiles, is the high-pitched note of delight which sometimes accompanies it, but oftener is toned down to just a tightening of what I have called the " gill muscles."

In analysing Joy and attempting to discover the various ways in which it expresses itself I said that Joy is prompted by a subconscious urge to escape with something that one has just come into

[1] See p. 76, footnote 3.

possession of. to make off with a capture. Watch the fishes in the Aquarium at feeding time : as soon as they get a bit of food in their mouth, they dart off as if they were being pursued. Now when fishes shoot off from a state of rest—that is, rest, comparatively speaking—one of the things that they do is clap their gills to, and, as long as they are darting around, they keep their gills tightly closed. It is a habit inherited from the fish that makes us tense the "gill muscles" and so produce  or, at the least, a sense of tension at the point of the throat corresponding to where the gills are in the fish.

But why the smile ? Well, if there is a subconscious sense of escaping with something, one would imagine that something to be in the mouth, as it would be with the fish. Hence the mouth is extended as if to accommodate that something, and the jaws pressed together as if holding something between them.

Friendliness

In the smile of Friendliness we have another case of Inversion. We find even in dogs what is readily recognized as a near relative of the human smile, that is, the reaction in its inverted form. I have known of a terrier that habitually greeted one with an expression of face that was as much like the human smile as it is possible for a dog to

make it. It showed its teeth exactly as we do and had much the same expression in the eyes. In fact it was so human that it was comic.[1]

But this is very exceptional. In saying that in dogs we have a near relative of the human smile I was thinking of an expression of face that is common to all dogs. The mouth is slightly opened, the ends of the mouth drawn back, and in the eyes is a characteristic expression which is recognized as one of friendliness. This is accompanied by the usual tail-wagging ; but that is rather a reaction to pleasure, which usually accompanies friendliness. The canine expression of face is best seen in dogs when one of them meets, not a human, but another dog which it regards as friendly.

This is by no means confined to dogs. I have seen two sea perch, when they happened to come to rest at the same time near each other on the floor of the tank, open their mouths at each other, and then, recovering their normal expression of face, continue to rest placidly side by side.

But this is probably nearer the original, rather than the inverted, form of the reaction. It's fairly evident that the contents of the fish's mind are something like this :

1. a consciousness of the other fish being inconveniently near ;

[1] See p. 51

2. a recognition of its being unlikely to do harm; but, at the same time,
3. an apprehension that it might possibly do so;
4. a sense of the necessity of warning it off by a show of hostility. From this follows the action of opening its mouth as if to attack—in fact, one of the fish that I observed made an incipient snap at the other, a very slight movement suggestive of a snap.

The habit in its original form is passed on to the descendants of the fish. We have a familiar example of it in the snake when anything approaches inconveniently near. It rears its head, drawing it backwards at the same time, opens its mouth, and utters a hiss. A cat does very much the same thing, including the hiss. I have even known a large rat that was cornered make a sound that had a pronounced resemblance to a hiss.

Whether the hiss is original in the snake or, what is more probable, a habit transmitted to it by the fish, being an evolute of some piscine habit which is more definitely effective in keeping a potential attacker at bay than the snake's habit, is a matter for further investigation.

The snake's habit of drawing its head back is probably original with the reptiles that are provided with longer necks than the fish has any pretensions

to, giving them a greater striking power if it should be found necessary to strike. It may also be due partly to the urge to draw back from the cause of the fear.

I draw attention to these two features, the hiss and the drawing back of the head, because we shall find both to be important.

In the human being himself we have a condition of mind and its reaction—to which Darwin gives considerable attention in *The Expression of the Emotions*, with several pictorial illustrations of the reaction—which has a close affinity with the snake's action. It is that of a man who finds himself suddenly face to face with something very terrifying, from which he cannot escape by flight. As part of the reaction, the mouth is opened wide and a peculiar cry is uttered which often sounds uncommonly like a hiss. The head is drawn sharply back, which, combined with the opening of the mouth, causes a gathering of the skin round the throat in wrinkles. All this is easily seen to be an evolute of the reptile's action in similar circumstances.

But the latter is not the original of the smile, although the physical reaction is not readily distinguishable from that original. The reptile takes this action simply because it finds escape by flight impossible.

In the original of the smile, however, a very similar action is taken, not because flight is found to

be **impossible,** but because it is felt to be **unnecessary**. The creature—fish, reptile, or whatever else one chooses to think of—sees before it something that it has not much reason to fear, but it feels obliged to take some action to keep the other from doing anything of a hostile nature and so reassure itself of its friendliness.

Now, by Inversion, the same reaction comes in course of time to attend a mental complex in which there is a sense of the other's friendliness, but at the same time a subconscious fear, a sense of the need to reassure oneself of that friendliness.

But there must be that subconscious fear in order to produce the reaction. One does not keep smiling at one's brothers and sisters, although there is no doubt of their being friendly—rather, **because** of that. Nor does one go on smiling at a person once one has reassured oneself of his or her friendliness.

Let us examine the reaction in its physical aspect. The most conspicuous parts of it are, of course, those which affect the mouth and the characteristic expression of friendliness in the eyes, which includes drawing the eyelids together to some extent.

Accompanying this is a sniff, more or less audible. This sniff I regard as a vestige of the hiss referred to earlier. Occasionally it can be heard as quite a distinct hiss.

There is also a tendency to draw the head back. With children this is very marked; in fact, they commonly lean the whole of the upper part of the body backwards, especially if there is somebody behind to find support against.

Scorn Not Your Origin

It may appear incredible—nay, to some, utterly revolting—that the sweet smile of a child should be the evolute of a reptilian habit, or that "tears such as angels weep," the heavenly dews of tenderness and compassion, should trace their origin to a thing so repellent as that described.

But one should not be surprised at this, seeing how difficult it sometimes is to grasp the bare fact of our having evolved from the lower creation. Anyone who, after reading a book on Evolution and with his mind full of pithecoid ancestors, looks upon a human form of uncommon beauty, either in the flesh or in a picture, sometimes finds his mind quite incapable of comprehending the possibility of any connection between that and an ape.

When, however, one does grasp the stupendous truth that underlies that supreme magic whereby things that are so reprehensible are transmuted into things of such beauty and dignity, one is lost in mute wonderment and awe.

CHAPTER X

THE WHEEL OF KARMA

MENTION has already been made in these pages of the symbolism of the Wheel which the ancients used to represent Karma. The resemblance is so obvious that, when we come to have a true understanding of Karma, the likeness at once strikes us, even if we had not been prepared for it. The likeness is, in fact, manifold.

The Cycle of Karma

We have already taken notice of the karmic cycles—the cycles of thought, feeling, volition and action, which one tends to follow and which constitute one's karma.[1]

We have now to observe that the completion of a karmic cycle tends itself to initiate a fresh cycle of the same kind. The Wheel of Karma, once set in motion, tends to go rolling on. Illustrations of these cycles are given in the *Milindapanha :*

[1] See p 26.

Then the Elder drew a circle on the ground and asked the King: "Is there any end to this circle?"

"No, it has no end."

"Well, that is like those circles spoken of by the Blessed One. 'By reason of the eye and of forms there arises sight; when these things come together there is impact; by reason of impact, feeling; by reason of feeling, volition; by reason of volition, activity; and from activity the eye is once more produced.' Now is there any end to this series?"

"No."

Now this is not a figure of speech but an accurate statement of a scientific fact. Every time form impinges on the consciousness the whole course of the development of the organ of sight may be said to be gone through afresh. Impact is followed by Feeling, interest or curiosity in the form whose existence the consciousness has been made aware of; which stirs up Volition, attention, the will to see; then comes the Activation of the muscles by which one anticipates seeing; and so, the eye, an organ which reacts readily to impacts of light waves, may be said to be created afresh. But the existence of this sensitized organ brings more readily within the field of consciousness the forms of things outside oneself and so initiates the cycle afresh. The completion

of that cycle initiates yet another. And so it goes on, cycles without end.

In Chapter VI we saw that breathing is just a process of going round and round a circle interminably.[1] When we know more about the life story of the heart, we shall probably find that in every heart-beat the whole of that story is unfolded, and that there is in the action of the heart the same process of going round and round a circle. The same might be said of all our bodily functions—infact, all Karma, all life.

The Momentum of Karma

And so we get what is probably the most obvious point of resemblance of Karma to a wheel—its power, a power that has been generated by use, activation, and which immediately brings to mind the momentum which is inherent in a rolling wheel. Sometimes the figure used by the ancients was a wheel turning; sometimes, a car running: but the idea behind both is the same—impetus, momentum.

> *Through it all bonds are bygone things,*
> *Through it all* ***constant rolling on*** *is razed away . . .*
> *Such is the Ariyan, the Eightfold Path.*
> *Psalms of the Early Buddhists.*

[1] See p. 93.

The Body cloaked in ignorance
Entrammell'd by the fourfold tie . . .
In trammels of illusion swathed,
Lo ! such a thing this body is,
Carried about in ***Karma's car,***
To manifold becoming doomed,
Now to success, to failure then. *Ibid.*

It is this impetus that maintains life, that in fact **constitutes** life. Our entire being is made up of karmic wheels, vortices, cycles—call them what you will—which are kept going by karmic momentum. If it were not so, every breath that we take, every heart-beat, every single action of every one of our organs, would have to be a conscious and deliberate act. If karmic momentum of every kind could be, and were, stayed, all organic life would immediately cease. So, for that matter, would inorganic substance. Because even in inorganic matter do we find vortices—and of a more literal kind—from the whirling electrons which make up an atom, to that gigantic vortex, the solar system, which is our potter's wheel on a most magnificent scale.[1]

By Karma the world exists, by Karma mankind exists, beings are bound by Karma as the linch-pin of the rolling cart keeps the wheel on.

Sutta Nipata (Vasetthasutta, 61).

[1] See p. 25, footnote.

Verily, no one can remain for even an instant doing no Karma; for helplessly is everyone driven to Karma by the energies born of nature.

Bhagavad Gita, III, 5.

One's character is nothing but the sum of all one's karmic vortices. It is Karma that makes each step one takes exactly—more or less—like every other step one takes, and so produces one's characteristic walk; it is momentum that gives gold its character and maintains it in that character; that makes every little ivy leaf grow into the shape of all other ivy leaves. All life is nothing but an immense congeries of karmic wheels or vortices, lesser wheels and greater wheels, wheels within wheels, vortices within vortices, each small eddy being made up of innumerable smaller eddies spinning within it at the rate of countless revolutions every instant, and itself making up with others of the same degree a larger whirlpool which, while it revolves within itself, is at the same time moving round a still larger whirlpool; and that again, round a still larger one; and so on, until we get a mighty maelstrom, the bounds of which are those of infinity itself and a revolution of which constitutes an Age of Brahma.

Wheels within Wheels

Let me give an illustration.

The human body (speaking proleptically) from the moment of conception in the matrix follows in the course of its pre-natal existence a cycle of development which is a replica in miniature of the whole long story of the evolution of the human form : first, the zygote, corresponding to the unicellular protozoon ; then, the blastosphere, which closely resembles a lowly organism called volvox ; next, the gastrula, which as closely resembles the fresh-water polyp, hydra ; at a later stage the human embryo has gill-slits and a longish tail. So it goes through stage after stage of the long process of evolution of the human body from the original protozoon. Countless millions of years shrink to a few months.

Recapitulation in the Realm of the Mind

In the realm of Psychology too one's karma develops during one's lifetime along a cycle which is a reflection on a much smaller scale of the cycle along which one's karma has developed in the course of one's evolution from animal to man.

It is a commonplace of observation that adult psychology or—put it another way—adult nature, adult karma, is different to child nature, child karma ; and that the latter has a marked resemblance to animal nature.

Let us look closer at this. Take any person's characteristic reaction to a particular stimulus :

every time he encounters that stimulus he goes off along a particular psychological channel, passing through a succession of psychological phases. That is, every time this particular stimulus crops up, he follows a course which is always much the same. But not quite. There is ever a tendency for experience to add a little to that course. With the result that in manhood one's reaction is in the main appreciably different to what it was in childhood. And in the evening of one's life it is different again. Although each reaction is in itself the same as it was in childhood, it advances further.[1]

But in a new life one does not start from where one left off in the last. One starts again at the beginning, but in this life arrives earlier at the final stage of one's last life. And if one lives the normal human span, one ends up a shade further advanced. But in the progress through successive lives one is going through a cycle which ultimately leads up to Nirvana, a cycle through which all life goes. One's karmic reaction, then, to a particular stimulus is a reflection in miniature of one's progress in that karma during the course of that life, which, again, is a small replica of the progress made in that karma during one's

[1] That is, of course, provided one is somewhat advanced in the human stage of evolution. One who is fairly young in humanhood —a savage, for example—does not act very differently in mature years from what he did as a child, and that is why the mentality of primitive people appears to us to be so childlike.

animate existence, which, again, is a karmic wheel revolving somewhere within the universe-cycle through which all life is moving.

Karma Is Built on Karma

There is yet another way in which we have karmic wheels within wheels. No wheel of karma is absolutely simple, and most wheels are extremely complex, consisting of a multiplicity of subsidiary wheels, the completion of every one of which is —to a greater or lesser degree—essential to the completion of the major wheel. Consider the process of eating and the mass of habits that are subsidiary and necessary preliminaries to it, to say nothing of the mass of karma which it sets in motion as effects.

For example: A child comes in from his games in a dirty and untidy condition and proceeds to the lunch table for his meal. But he is made to understand that he must first get himself clean and presentable before he may sit down to eat—that is, before the karmic cycle which springs from hunger can be completed. Several successive experiences of this kind inculcate in him the habit of making himself presentable before appearing at table for meals, and the habit becomes karma so fully that he cannot eat a meal in a dirty condition or, sometimes, in dirty company or surroundings. So into the

karmic cycle of eating is incorporated the cycle of eating cleanly.

The Vicious Circle: Delusion Produces Karma, Karma Intensifies Delusion

Karma is initiated by delusion. But in doing karma one does not remove the delusion, but makes it so much the greater, which in its turn intensifies the propensity to do the same thing.

Karma is the root of that Agnana which causes one to view one uniform Brahma as manifold.

Vedanta Sutras.

You regard a man—however subconsciously—as hostile to you and act towards him as towards an enemy. But that only intensifies your sense of his hostility and predisposes you to further acts of hostility.

Fortunately Good Karma moves in circles just as Bad Karma does, the completion of each circle originating a fresh one, or tending to do so.

Love and Hatred are caused by Karma and they say that Karma has its origin in Delusion; Karma is the root of birth and death; and birth and death they call misery. *Jain Sutras* (*Uttaradhyana*).

The Infectiousness of Karma

The power of Karma, its momentum, manifests itself in yet another way. The vortex of Karma not

only goes on whirling in itself but also stirs up vortices in its surroundings; the wheel of Karma, in revolving, sets other wheels revolving that are in contact with it. Karma, by its action in one person, has the power of stirring up similar karma in other people.

This will be the subject of our next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

THE INFECTIOUSNESS OF KARMA

IT is a phenomenon commonly observed that one person yawning causes others to yawn, or at least gives them a strong inclination to do so. It is not only yawning that is infectious: laughing, crying, cheerfulness, wrath—in fact, all Karma—is infectious.

Cause of Infectiousness

The reason for this infectiousness has already been given in an earlier chapter.[1] The fear that is at the root of Karma is caught from another and, with it, the karmic urge. When one dog barks, others follow suit. One can see that it is fear, a sense of the presence of danger of some sort, that makes a dog bark. This apprises others of the presence of danger, real or imaginary, and sets them barking. A deer grazing along with the rest of the herd sees something suspicious in the vegetation and makes off at top speed; the others immediately

[1] See p. 60.

join him in his headlong flight without waiting to see what caused him to run. How strong this urge is to follow a runaway is well known to those who have attempted to stem a panic.[1]

The following imaginary example is intended to show how, with the development of a karmic urge, infectiousness naturally attaches to it.

A regiment has given a farewell party to its colonel who, after having allowed his men during the last year or two to get noticeably slack in their drills and their carriage, retires from active service. The last of the left-over buns are still on the table in the Corporals' Mess when the new colonel sets about the task of tightening things up. But he finds it no easy task, especially as the men show signs of being mutinous when subjected to a ramrod discipline that borders, as they affect to see it, on

[1] By one of those startling coincidences that one meets in life, I pick up to-day's Calcutta *Statesman* shortly after writing this paragraph and find the following in Kim's column

I think it will be generally admitted that panic is infectious. A mob of people are not panic-stricken all at once, though it may look like it because of the tremendous speed with which panic spreads. But, mind you, the thing can be stayed, provided it is taken in hand at once by a few hard, resolute men who have not caught the infection. But it is of no use trying to stem a panic by shouting and swearing and firing off revolvers. Orders must be given in a calm voice and there must be no shoving. It is the shoving which accelerates infection. And howling. Don't howl when waters threaten.

The words of advice given by Kim are valuable, particularly his insistence on a "calm voice." Karma will never be cured by karma.

slave-driving. But the new colonel will not be baulked of his purpose and inflicts exemplary punishment on anyone that he finds at any time whatsoever walking in a manner that is not strikingly soldierlike. He thus strikes sufficient fear into all under his command to make them brace themselves up immediately they catch sight of him or hear his voice. Furthermore—and here is where the infectiousness has its beginnings—the sight of one man suddenly smartening up in his carriage makes others immediately do the same. The train of thought is a conscious one. They see that the first man's action was due to fear of their martinet of a colonel whose presence somewhere in the offing he had suddenly become aware of, and, although they themselves do not see the ogre, they realize that the same danger threatens them as had threatened the first man and, seized with the same fear, they follow his example. Constant repetition of this process of thought makes it ever quicker and so more and more subconscious. And so, as the reaction of stiffening out when the appropriate stimulus presents itself develops into second nature, which is karma of a sort, there develops with it the infectiousness which attaches to all Karma.

One's karma, then, comes into operation not only as a result of one's encountering the appropriate stimulus oneself, but also as a result of contacting

others who react karmically to that stimulus. We are continually being infected with the karma of those around us; it is difficult to see another doing, or attempting to do, a thing without our own desire and volition and even activity being aroused. Watch spectators at an exciting match of any kind and you will find that their activity is stirred so far that they make incipient movements of hitting, kicking or throwing an imaginary ball or doing whatever else the game consists of.

Mutual Infection

There is another way in which karma is caught from another, illustrated by the following example:

X and Y are the best of friends; X in the course of conversation says something that deeply wounds Y without his intending it. Y scents hostility in X and is immediately up in arms. X knows perfectly well that Y has made a mistake, but Y's show of hostility may swamp that bit of knowledge and he in his turn may allow himself to be deluded into regarding his erstwhile friend as an enemy and so become really hostile to him. The fires of hostility may blaze up on both sides to an alarming extent, each being infected by the other, until a *rapprochement* becomes well-nigh impossible.

In a case like this the fear that is caught is not of a third entity, but of each other. But the karmas

need not be the same; they may be complementary. The karmic reaction that we know as Joy results, as we have seen in Chapter V, from a fear of being despoiled of a capture; one makes off with it to prevent that happening. But the act of running off will arouse in another the fear of one's getting away with the coveted possession, to prevent which he sets out in pursuit. We observe behaviour amongst children and even dogs which is subconsciously a repetition of this; when one starts careering about in an access of joy, another starts chasing that one.

This is innocent enough, but it represents what happens in all kinds of karma, often with consequences which are far graver. Pride, ambition, avarice, and other things in that category are all forms of karma which often awaken karma in others that is of a complementary nature.

Long Distance Infection

There is yet another, and a much subtler, way in which we can catch the karma of others, people whom we may never have met and even people who have died and been long forgotten. Anyone who has been accustomed to being treated in a particular way, good or bad, by another carries about with him the infection of that person's karma, inclining others to treat him in the same way. Hence is it that those who have been the victims of injustice and

oppression at the hands of one person make themselves easy targets for still further oppression at the hands of all and sundry.

Collective Karma

Members of a collective body of any kind tend to catch their karma from one another and so make a collective karma peculiar to that body. It is thus that we get national character; it is thus that we have the collective karma of every class of society, of every caste, of every profession and calling, of every family. This mass karma is as a rule more difficult to overcome than one's own personal karma, because, in fighting it, one is up against, not only oneself, but the whole of the body politic with which the karma is shared.

Mass karma is more readily caught by personal contact than in any other way. People staying in a foreign country, the language of which is well known to them and whose people they have constant dealings with, are sometimes surprised at the ease with which the mentality and ways of that country settle on them.

National and international karma, class and interclass karma, is just individual karma writ large, and is subject to the same laws as govern the karma between individuals. A class that becomes "attached" to karma of any kind may be making

future trouble for itself in so doing. Thus are the sins of the fathers visited on their children and their children's children. Again, national karma is internationally infectious; history is full of international epidemics of different kinds: land-grabbing, dictatorships—there was an epidemic of "tyrants" even as far back as the days of the Hellenic city states—nations overloading themselves with armaments, and intense nationalism, economic, cultural, linguistic, and otherwise.

The Leaven of Mass Karma

The question arises: What attitude should one adopt towards the mass karma of one's family, class, race, etc.? To diverge from them merely for a "trick of singularity" amounts to no more than being governed by one's own personal karma, that of eccentricity, which arises from a suspicion of one's fellows and a tendency to withdraw from them.

One should behave with regard to the mass karma that we share with the other members of the various collective bodies to which we belong as we should behave with respect to our own personal karma; that is, detach ourselves from the karma, but not from our fellows.

We must be ever on our guard against the infection of bad karma from others. In the *Jain Sutras* we are told that a *pious monk prevents the*

influx of karma through bad channels. When our Lord tells His disciples to *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy,* He has the same principle in mind. The metaphor is most apt, because the infection of karma spreads as subtly as leavening does in dough.

For those who strive to set their feet on the Path of Dharma, Dhammapada, one of the greatest difficulties is that which is encountered in the mass karma which they share with their fellows. There is so much in one's racial and class karma that is found to be based on false values; and, in attempting to free oneself from any part of it, one always has the feeling of being up against those around one. But one must persist in one's course even if one cannot make others see that it is the only road to true happiness. Yoga is civil war, the war of the SELF on the self, and when one is entering into the battle there is nothing that daunts one more than to see in the opponents' ranks father, mother, wife, brothers, sisters, honoured teachers, people whom one holds in high esteem and who are held in high esteem by others. One feels then as Arjuna did.

Seeing these my kinsmen, O Krishna, arrayed and ready to fight, my limbs fail and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stands on end; Gandiva (his bow) *slips from my hand and my*

skin burns all over; I cannot stand; my mind is awhirl.

Bhagavad Gita, I, 28-30.

But one must not turn back.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

Matthew, X, 34-6.

This need not mean actual hostility—in any case, not as concerns one's own attitude. It is possible to escape the infection of bad karma without adopting an attitude of hostility to its source.

Sympathy

From what has so far been said about it, it would appear that the infectiousness of Karma is a veritable Old Man of the Sea, clinging to us and forcing us to walk, against our will, in evil paths. But it has enormous advantages, which fully balance its disadvantages.

It is the basis and origin of human Sympathy. It is only because Karma is catching that, not only are we enabled to feel as others do, but also we **cannot help doing so**. Sympathy means "feeling with" and is a full sister of the word "Compassion."

"Feeling with," that is, having the same reactions to a stimulus as the person to whom the stimulus presents itself, although one does not come up against the stimulus oneself. It is part of the illusion of this karma that one does not readily distinguish between the other person and oneself; one identifies oneself with him—subconsciously at least. Hence one feels the karmic impulse to do for the other person what one would do for oneself in the same circumstances.

Forgiveness

It is Sympathy that alone makes possible Forgiveness of others and, what is greater, Atonement for others' offences. True forgiveness is the same thing as "understanding:" it involves the ability to see things through another's eyes—and to see a little more than he does. But it is that little more that is so important. It is the error in his outlook, and, seeing that, one can remain unmoved by what the other says and does. The example of the mayor-magistrate and Fantine [1] shows us the principle underlying Forgiveness.

What our Lord tells us about Forgiveness is somewhat startling.

If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not

[1] See Ch. XVIII.

men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. *Matthew*, VI, 14-15.

Now what are we to understand by this? That the Lord of all Creation takes His cue from His creatures, sinful and imperfect as they are? Perish the thought! But give the expression, "your heavenly Father," its true meaning, and the passage becomes perfectly clear.

"Your heavenly Father" is God, but not a person seated in august majesty in a place called Heaven—wherever that be. It is the God within you, "the Dweller in the Innermost," whose omniscience and infallibility enables you to unmask Karma and throw off its hold over you. Being unable to forgive others an action of theirs arising out of karma usually goes with the inability to overcome that same karma oneself. If we are irritated by the acquisitiveness of others, it is because we have not yet overcome our own acquisitiveness. But, if one can overlook it and remain unaffected by it, one has mastered one's own acquisitiveness; one is enabled by one's heavenly Father to renounce that karma and thereby gain immunity from the suffering which results from attachment to it.

In point of fact a person's constantly criticizing others for any fault usually indicates the presence of the same fault in himself. It is often surprising how correct a description a person gives of himself when

he is describing his neighbours. One who is forever talking of the guile of other people will be found very often to be uncommonly wily himself; another, who delights in retailing accounts of the sexualities of the people he knows, will, as often as not, be found to be no less libidinous than those he criticises; from the conversation of a third you would get the impression that the whole world was just a huge den of swindlers. Swindlers, swindlers, all around—from his accounts. Actually, he has been standing in a "*Salle des Illusions*," a Hall of Mirrors, without realizing it.[1]

[1] Conversely, what one sees and notices and gives one's attention to in others one tends naturally, often without one's willing it—nay, even quite unconsciously—to reproduce in oneself, whether it be good or whether it be bad.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

Matthew, VI, 22-23.

These two principles, that is, this one and the one given in the text, constitute together a cycle, the attentiveness to certain characteristics in others tending to result in the formation of those characteristics in oneself, and the existence of certain characteristics in one's own nature tending to make one attentive to the same characteristics in others This cyclic law is one of the most important and most far-reaching in life. From an understanding of it we come to see how very deep are the effects of one's contemplation, whether it be of the good, the beautiful, and the true, things that connect themselves with the eternal and the imperishable, or whether it be of things that are of the moment, shallow and superficial, "things base and vile, holding no quantity."

It is a profound truism that none of us ever sees things as they are without Karma distorting them to our view. Even one's conception of God is largely a reflection of one's own personality.

CHAPTER XII

TRANSMUTATION

NATURAL habits, like everything else we know, are subject to change, as much in their psychological as in their physical aspect. This comes about through the operation of a most remarkable law, a law which is in operation in the evolution of all things, the most commonplace as well as the most sublime, things of matter as well as things of the spirit. Let us glance at the development of a very commonplace thing indeed—the wheel as used in wheeled vehicles —in the course of which the operation of the law will be readily discernible.

Evolution of the Wheel

What the earliest form of the wheel was can only be conjectured. The most primitive that we know of took the form of a thick disc of wood with a hole in the centre. In course of time this took the more complex form of a hub, spokes and outer ring. Then a new factor was introduced—the tyre—of iron at first and very inconspicuous. It was not so

inconspicuous when later it came to be made of solid rubber. When, later still, that develops into the pneumatic tyre, it becomes a most important factor in the wheel. In our own generation we have watched this become bigger and bigger in proportion to the rest of the wheel until now the tyre of, say, an æro wheel, constitutes almost the entire wheel.

It will be seen how into a complex structure consisting of many elements a new element insinuates itself as an inconspicuous adjunct and gradually increases in size and importance relatively to the others, ultimately eclipsing them and reducing them to an altogether subsidiary position. Needless to say, the particular thing of which these are all constituent factors undergoes a great change as a result. Often the change is so great as to render it irrecognizable as an evolute of its original and causes it to be given a different name from the latter and be treated as entirely unconnected with it.

The Story of a Hat

An example of this is seen in two types of headgear worn in India.

Most people are familiar with the sola topi or tropical helmet used by Europeans in India and, now, in the tropics generally. Equally familiar is the turban, the headgear of the natives of most tropical countries, consisting of a length of cloth wound

round and round the head. Now the topi is an evolute of the turban, having developed out of it, although it bears little resemblance to its original.

Come back with me to a time when the first English settlements were made in India, the early days of John Company. We find the Europeans of those days wearing a costume which, except for their top boots—worn, we are told, as a protection against snakes—was identical with that of the upper class Indians of those times and included the large Indian turban, tied over a quilted conical cap such as is still worn in the Punjab. It was found, however, that no protection from the sun was provided for the face and neck. This, it is said, was remedied within a few years by extending the quilted cap downwards to make a sort of brim which covered the forehead and neck.

But the additional bits proved rather a mixed blessing, especially when they became sodden with perspiration. As they could not be sufficiently stiffened by quilting, attempts were made to make them stand off the face and neck by lining them with long feathers. The sola topi proper first saw the light of day when a member of the Cawnpore Tent Club used, instead of quills, the sola (or shola) reed.

Now sola combines extreme lightness with ideal heat-resisting properties and, although intended only

as a stiffener at first, gradually usurped the place and functions of the cumbersome turban and the irritant quilting. We find that within the course of a few years the turban and the quilting had so far diminished in size as to have ceased to perform any effective function and were reduced to mere decorations, and that the sola had come to be the most important factor by far in the make-up of the sola topi. The quilting has been discarded from some of the latest types of tropical helmet, but the pugri (or diminutive turban) is still used for ornamental purposes.

Another Illustration of the Law—Taken from Biology

Perhaps it was not necessary to wander into obscure alleyways of history to point the truth that this Law of Transmutation can alter a thing out of all recognition by changing the relative proportions of its component factors. In the realm of Biology examples of its operation are found that will be familiar to everybody.

All the mammalia, it is fairly certain, are descended from a common stock, although it cannot be stated with any certainty to-day after the lapse of so many millions of years what the particular specification of that stock was. And so it is impossible to compare it with any mammal types now

extant. But we can compare these types with one another and see how homologous anatomical units have developed at very different relative rates in different animals.

For example, the foreleg of a giraffe, the paddle of a dolphin, the bat's wing, and the human arm, are all evolved from a common original. Comparing the first two, we find that the length of the radius in the former is three times that of a digit; in the latter it is only one-third that of the shortest digit. The relative sizes of the radius and digit are altogether reversed as between these two animals, and it is obvious that the ratio in one or both of them has altered very considerably from what it was in their common original.

The Operation of the Law in the Realm of Karma

Now the same sort of thing happens to a habit. Every habit is a complexity, made up of different elements and, like everything else in nature, is subject to change. This change consists almost entirely of a gradual alteration of the relative strengths of the constituent elements. But the cumulative effect is such that a karma is evolved which has no readily visible resemblance to, or connection with, its original—any more than that between the wing of a bird and the foreleg of a saurian.

It is, in fact, this process of Transmutation that turns Bad Karma into Good. It is the action of this law that transmutes a grovelling Obsequiousness into a God-fearing nature, a natural disposition and readiness to accord one's life with what one believes to be the divine will; transmutes an uncomfortable and disturbing Restlessness of spirit into a zest in being always usefully engaged; transmutes Covetousness into Emulation; savage Wrath into Tenacity; Greed into Thoroughness.

In all Karma there are two elements always present: the first, a Fear element, an apprehension of something; the second, a Hope element, the anticipation of escape in a particular direction. In the entire absence of Fear there obviously can be no urge to do anything. In the entire absence of the Hope of escape in any particular direction there can be no urge to take it.

Now both the Fear and the Hope have regard to certain participants in the action.

There is first of all the karma-subject, the person from whose point of view we have all along been considering Karma, the person in whose mind the karmic urge takes shape and who is the real doer.

Besides this, there is the karma-object, the person or thing, persons or things, which constitute the source of the fear and the object of the karmic urge. The karma-object may be very real—the object of one's

Love, Jealousy, Emulation, Contempt, or whatever it is—but we have to take notice **not** of the reality (even if it were possible to know what the absolute reality is), but what it appears to be in the mind of the karma-subject. And this is to a lesser or greater extent a figment of his imagination. Often it is entirely imaginary as far as the present is concerned.

There is yet another participant in the karmic drama to be considered who has a very great influence on the course that the karmic urge will take. Anyone who is observant enough will have noticed that, whenever a karmic urge is experienced, there comes with it generally a consciousness (or subconsciousness) of what one often refers to as "people" or "others" or just "they," onlookers who take an interest in one's actions and of whom one somehow stands in awe. In the minds of most people the concept is very vague and formless. It seems to be more commonly a concept of a single person representative of the mass than of a mass of people or even a number of people. Or we think in a vague sort of way of people in the mass but as having one mind and one volition, a kind of body corporate.

This **mass-being** forms a sort of background to all Karma and plays much the same part as the chorus in a Greek play. Or, better still, we may liken it to

those characters of Shakespeare that go in couples and that the author quite obviously intended to be representative of bodies of people rather than individual characters—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, representing the Danish court circle; Salarino and Solanio, representing the intelligentsia of Venice; Marullus and Flavius, representing Roman officialdom. I say "better still" because a mass of people with a common outlook very, very rarely act together in a mass, but their mass-karma appears in the actions of individuals or small groups of two and three. Nor does one think of the whole mass but of one or two representatives thereof. If one heard it said, for instance, that a certain class of people exhibited a remarkable keenness for the cultivation of good taste in literature, the mental picture that would form in one's mind would be some such thing as this: a man belonging to that class that one happens to be acquainted with sitting by his fireside reading a book which he has culled under the guidance of some literary journal, with a few more books of the same kind at his elbow awaiting absorption. It would be a fleeting and not too well-defined image, but there would be one person in it, or at most two or three, not the mass which was the subject of the statement.

Volumes can, and probably will, be written on the subject of the mass-being that haunts our subconscious, its genesis, its nature, and its immense

influence on us for good and for evil. It is of vital interest to us here because upon it depends the transmutation of Bad Karma into Good and the deterioration of Good Karma into Bad. Upon its nature depends one's happiness and unhappiness, and, although that nature is made as much by others as by ourselves, it is in our power to take it into our hands and mould it as we will and so make ourselves masters of our own happiness.

As it has shape (or lack of shape) only in the mind, it is not the same for two people and in fact is subject to change even in the same person. We might go further and say that in the mind of any one person there are often two or more mass-beings present. One may have in mind one's family, one's class, one's religious sect, one's race, each thought of very vaguely as an entity in the mass. It is chiefly with regard to this mass-entity of our subconsciousness that the Fear and the Hope in Karma are felt.

The Quest

We have a tendency to regard Life as somehow in the keeping of the mass-entity, which we identify with this or that group of people, and much of our journeyings, literal and metaphorical, on this globe are made in the quest of the source and purveyor of Life. Paradoxical as it may sound, life is one

long quest for Life, for the visible embodiment of the mass-being in whose power it lies to give us Life or to withhold it from us. We seek it in other lands among races which appear to be blessed with Life in a form in which happiness is made secure to them. But on closer acquaintance they are found themselves to be no more exempt than one's own people from the haunting disquietude that one has sought refuge from oneself. People from the country seek Life in the whirl and glitter of town life; the town dweller seeks it in the quiet of the countryside and regards the herdsman that he sees idly grazing his cattle in the pastures by the river as specially favoured by Life. People seek it in fashionable society, identifying that with the mass-being of their dreams in whose charmed circle they will find Life without blemish, Life that is perfect and unending. But they discover sooner or later that the circle is charmed only in the sense that it consists entirely of people on the same quest as oneself and charmed into it by the same illusion.

Even among those who declare and actually believe that they regard God as the great source of Life, as Life itself, the vast majority, in shaping their actions, are guided, not so much by thoughts of what God would approve, but what one or two of their acquaintance would approve whom they think

of in a vague sort of way as having communion with God.

But, whatever guise it may take, the mass-being of our subconscious has an immense and vital influence on the course of one's karma and in the making of one's happiness or unhappiness.

What is the essential difference between, say, the bully who forces those in his power to do his will, irrespective of its nature or their inclinations, and the law-giver who gives a people a code of laws which makes for good relations among its members; between grovelling Obsequiousness and a submission of one's will to a higher and wiser power; between Restlessness and the urge to be usefully engaged? The essential difference is just one of the countenance of the mass-being. In the case of the first in each of these pairs the countenance of the mass-being is seen to be hostile and forbidding; in the second it is friendly and approving. In other words, a person who is restless in spirit has a sense of that restlessness being irksome to others; a man who is ill at ease unless he is usefully engaged has a sense of that characteristic meeting with others' approval.

Now this difference makes a radical change in the Fear content and Hope content of Karma. The change is slow, the one increasing at the expense of the other. But the result is the evolution of

something that is not easily recognizable as an evolute of its original. Let us take an example.

Transmutation: An Example

The habit certainly exists among the mammalia—and was probably developed earlier in the evolutionary scale—of a stronger animal sparing a weaker one that it sees cowering before it and within its power, the act of forbearance being prompted by a recognition of the latter's inoffensiveness. Now the concurrence of the stronger animal in this karma of the other has a remarkable effect upon it. With recurring experience the weaker animal becomes gradually conscious of the stronger's forbearance and ascribes it to its own action—to which, in fact, it is largely due. Conscious also that its submission is agreeable to the other. The consciousness that what it does is agreeable to others and that they concur in its will to life entirely changes the complexion of the karma. The fear element in the karma is decreased and the hope element increased; the animal's submission is the readier with greater assurance of its moving the other's indulgence.

This karma is carried into humanhood. Men of a certain type find a zest and pleasure in submitting to authority, fully sensible that in so doing they are finding favour with, and escaping ill-usage at the hands of, that authority. Often the karma becomes

the basic karma of their life, the mainspring of all their activities. Thus we get Dutifulness, a law-abiding nature, and—when it is the will of the Supreme that we constantly endeavour to accord our lives with—Religious and Devotional Zeal.

But notice that the instinctive actions which are an expression of devotional fervour are in essence the same as those of its original. This has already been observed in Chapter VIII.[1]

The Law of Inversion in Karma

But the process of transmutation goes even further. We have seen that in its secondary state the karma has as its purpose the drawing out of forbearance, clemency, beneficence, from the object. Now it is one of life's wonders that an act of clemency, particularly if unexpected, often makes people behave in the same way as if they were seeking to evoke clemency. A person gets an unhoped-for pardon and—it's just human nature—immediately falls at the feet of the person from whom that clemency proceeds.

Cause and effect have changed places. The action that was intended to cause clemency becomes now the effect of it.

The reason for this is not far to seek and should be clearly understood: It is found to be but one

[1] See p. 117.

manifestation of the momentum of Karma, the tendency of Karma to repeat itself. Since, subconsciously, one regards the other's clemency as being effected by one's own action, one proceeds to repeat that action, to make sure of it, exactly as happens when the action had initially been **actually** done.

But it is not merely the outward gestures of Dutiful Respect that are evoked by clemency, but also Duty and Respect themselves. A sense of being in the power of another—anyone who stands in a position of authority over one, such as an employer or superior officer or master at school—who is at the same time benign and clement moves one, provided such karma is native to one, to a submission of one's will to that authority and co-operation with him.

Very nearly akin to this is Devotion. A consciousness of Life comes—by that wonderful process of Inversion—to have the power of evoking submission, not to a visible, known authority, but to an invisible, unknown one. The sense of Life is followed immediately by a sense of its having proceeded from Him and, as the mind cannot conceive of that happening except as a result of one's own action—the act of submission—one proceeds to make that submission. This is a higher Devotion. The Great Unknown no longer wears a frown, but is seen to be ineffably benign.

But the greater the benignity, the fuller is one's submission.

Of course, the sense of Life does not always produce the same effect. The reaction may be Joy, Love, Philanthropy, or something else. Often it evokes two or more different karmas almost simultaneously. People have been known to laugh and weep for joy almost at the same time. But, whatever the effect, it comes about through the process of Inversion. One is conscious of life but,

Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.

Or, rather, it comprehends some action of its own that brings it and immediately proceeds to do—or, as the subconscious sees it, to **continue**—the action to make Life more secure.

Transmutation Which Follows Success

We have so far been watching the process of transmutation brought about by the noble forbearance—real or imagined—of the karma-object. But it is not only by this means that the transmutation can be effected. Very often it is by the action of the karma-subject that the destructive flood of evil karma is turned into channels in which it is made useful and beneficial to one's fellows. Karma proceeds from a sense—a more or less deluded

sense—of imminent danger to one and an urge to stave off that danger. It is this sense in one form or another which, as we have seen, makes one amass riches, develop power, acquire knowledge, cultivate ability of one kind or another. Now one can so far succeed as to feel that no further effective opposition can be raised against one's particular purpose. One has a sense of security in its possession. That particular karma moves forward to its goal without any sense of frustration. There is the same sense of others' acquiescence in one's karma as in the case we had under consideration earlier, although the acquiescence proceeds not so much from the nobility of the karma-object as from their realization that no effective opposition can be raised to it. But this sense of one's karma moving forward unopposed by others has a remarkable effect on it. The sense of its being accepted by others has the effect of making one **make** it acceptable to them. The man who has been amassing riches for himself, realizing that others are tacitly agreeable to his possession and use of wealth tends to use it in such a way that **would** be agreeable to them. In this use of his wealth he experiences a refined pleasure, a zest, and in this we have the seeds of the philanthropist and benefactor.

In the same way, in the doing of karma of other kinds there comes a stage when the sense of

frustration, of outside opposition, which accompanies the doing of it and which causes it to be rajasic, gives place to a sense of its being agreeable to others which makes one labour to **make** it as agreeable as possible to them. Thus is bad karma turned into good.

Now good karma of any kind tends to infect all other karma and make it good. A man who is accepted as intellectual amongst his fellows tends to use that intellect for their good ; the use of it makes him see how another karma to which he is addicted is prejudicial to those around him and he sets about to correct it. Or, people submit to one's power and as a result one tends to use it for their good and in so doing one curbs other karma which one feels is injurious to others.

Love, Sympathy, Devotion, are other virtues which, having been developed, exercise their influence in leavening one's nature, turning evil karma into good.

Two Laws Connected with Evolution

Now, with regard to the evolution of Karma there are two facts to be noted, facts which are equally true of the evolution or development of all those countless other things that are subject to change.

First, two things which are identical, if allowed to evolve independently of each other, will evolve in

different ways, two evolutes ultimately emerging which are quite different one from another. Two sections of the same race, speaking identically the same language, if cut off from each other, come in the course of a few decades to speak different dialects and, if they remain unconnected for a few centuries, two different languages. In the same way, a habit peculiar to a particular species evolves differently in two different lines of descent from that species. A lamb and a dog have different ways of expressing joy, though both their reactions to that emotion are evolved from a common original.

The second and more important fact to be noted is that an evolute does not necessarily supplant its original. In most cases the two go on existing side by side. In the same species, and even in the same individual, the same instinct will be found at different stages of its evolution, just as there are creatures extant to-day representing almost all the stages of biological evolution. The development of the spirit of the law-giver does not of itself rule out the bully in one. The lower and the higher karma continue side by side until one takes the former in hand and weeds it out.

And there is surely no greater wisdom than well to time this weeding out, this elimination of the tares. The following simile expresses this in another way.

Out of Ugliness, Beauty

One day we see growing up from the ground an ugly structure consisting of poles and planks lashed together to form a crazy sort of edifice, which day by day we find rising higher and higher into the air. But then we begin to discern within all this ugliness a beautiful building taking shape, a dream crystallizing out in marble. We might like to see all the poles and planks pulled down as they obscure and mar the building. But for a long time to come must they be suffered to stand—until, in fact, the dream has fully materialized. The time will then be ripe to remove the ugly scaffolding, which not only mars the beauty of the building but obscures it and interferes with its use.

Good and Evil live so indissolubly intertwined in our nature that often it's impossible to remove the latter without doing regrettable injury to the former. They seem so closely akin that but a slight change of view converts one into the other, like colours in shot silk. Truth to tell, Good Karma and Bad Karma are of the same substance and have the same characteristic of inherent force, momentum.

CHAPTER XIII

GOOD AND BAD KARMA

THERE are in human nature some characteristics which we regard as bad and others which we regard as good. The former constitute our Bad Karma, the latter our Good Karma. And it's the purpose of this chapter to discover the essential difference between the one and the other. Or, if it prove that no such difference is discoverable, to determine what it is that makes the one **appear** as bad and the other as good.

The Difference between Good and Bad Karma is not Necessarily an Ethical One

Now it must be clearly borne in mind that we are **not** attempting here to set up an ethical norm or criterion with which to judge whether an action that one has done or contemplates doing is **right** or **wrong,** to formulate a test that will enable us to determine whether we should or should not adopt a

particular course of action that is open to us. In fact, we are not concerned at the moment with isolated actions, but with tendencies. Our subject in this chapter consists of the impulses which proceed from the heart, from one's nature, from Karma. These impulses are very often at variance with one another and are always, or almost always, interfused with conscious reasoning, which either reinforces or modifies them. But those elements of our conduct which proceed from conscious reasoning must be stripped away, and it is our nature, naked and unadorned, that we are to consider.

The Human Mind Instinctively Divides Characteristics into Good and Bad

About the goodness or badness of the various traits of human character there seems to be fairly general agreement. There appears to be a sense of good and bad innate in the human composition that treats Generosity, Courage, Cleanliness, and Industriousness, for example, as good; and Boorishness, Deceit, Peevishness, Meanness and the like as bad.

It should be noted at the outset that Good Karma, no less than Bad, proceeds from one's nature and has karmic momentum behind it. Which means, not only that the doing of good karma is practically effortless, but also that prevention thereof causes

discomfort, amounting at times to intense suffering. A person whose natural instincts are those of neatness and order might sometimes suffer acute distress if he should find himself surrounded by disorder and were prevented, say, by sickness, from giving rein to his instinct for ordering all things neatly in his surroundings.

It does not appear that Good and Bad Karma are fundamentally and essentially different or that they exist in watertight compartments, forever separated and utterly incapable of interchange or fusion. On the contrary, it appears to be the rule in nature for the change to be constantly taking place of the one into the other, a subtle change that turns Neatness into Fastidiousness; Meddlesomeness into Helpfulness; Obedience into Servility; Patriotism into Parochialism.

And here is another fact of which we must not lose sight while we are engaged in trying to determine the difference between Good and Bad Karma: Although we are generally agreed that Generosity, say, is good while we are thinking of it in the abstract, there is never complete agreement among those who are witnesses of a specific instance of a generous act that it is truly one of Generosity and not one of Prodigality. X's Neatness is admired by A, but B despises it as Foppishness. While most people regard Y as a time-server, others

quite genuinely see in him a commendable Adaptability of nature.

Does the Goodness of Karma Depend upon Its Altruism Content?

The reader may be somewhat surprised at our setting out in search of a thing that seems to him to lie right in front of us. Why! says he, the difference between Good and Bad Karma is that between Altruism and Egoism. All Karma that aims at benefiting oneself is bad, and all that aims at benefiting others is good.

At first glance the proposition seems sound enough. But on closer scrutiny it is found that neither half of it is tenable. Taking the first half—that Bad Karma is synonymous with Egoism and consists of all Karma which aims at benefiting oneself—we find that it connotes that Courage is bad when used in one's own defence; Cleanliness is bad as applied to one's own person or possessions; even the Diligence, Assiduity and Perseverance of the Good Apprentice that in our youth we were taught to admire and emulate are Bad Karma as they aim at benefiting oneself.

The proposition on the other side of it implies a good deal that few people would be ready to concede. All karma, it has been suggested, that aims at benefiting others is good. But this begs the question.

In fact, the whole proposition is a case of *petitio principii.* Benefiting means "doing good" and we are left with a statement which does not help us a bit: All karma which aims at doing good to others is good. We have still to discover a criterion for determining what is **good** for people. There are countless people who are trying wholeheartedly and in all sincerity to do good to others, but who are regarded by the latter as officious and meddlesome and sometimes as an unmitigated nuisance. Is all well-intentioned effort of this kind good, however ill-advised it may be?

Another fact bearing on the motives of our habitual actions that we must take into consideration is this: Almost all actions have an immediate and an ultimate purpose, and very many have intermediate purposes in between these two. Which of all these must be examined to discover its egoism or altruism content? Because selfishness can be shown to be at the root of all our doings. It is the *fons et origo* of all human activity, the fountain head, remote, inaccesible, and almost unknown, from which springs every breath we take, every movement we make. And so we are driven to the conclusion that all karma is bad.

In point of fact, the question of the selfishness or unselfishness of one's motive never arises until there is a clash of karmas, and the selfishness of the one or

unselfishness of the other is gauged by comparison of the two. And then it is the more obvious and, often, more superficial motive that is put into the scale.

Some will object that egotism does not mean merely seeking to benefit oneself, but seeking to do so **at the expense of another.** And, *per contra*, in altruism the aim is not merely to benefit another, but to do so **even when one sees that it is to one's own detriment.**

If that be so, then we shall find that the vast majority of our urges are quite impossible of classification, as there is neither egotism nor altruism, as thus defined, traceable in them at all.

Is the Goodness or Badness of Karma to Be Judged by its Results?

Some people have a way of referring the goodness or badness of actions to their results, making all that good which leads to happiness and all that evil the results of which prove to be regrettable. But there are several objections to this proposition.

In the first place, much the same difficulty arises here as we encountered in the last proposition. An action—**any** action—may be regarded as a link somewhere in a long chain of cause and effect. All the links which precede it may be regarded as its causes, remote or immediate. All that follow may be regarded

as its effects, immediate or ultimate. The previous proposition may with reference to our simile be put thus: The goodness or badness of a link may be determined by testing an earlier link. But the difficulty occurs: Which of the earlier links?

The present proposition now refers us to a succeeding link and a similar difficulty confronts us. And if one says: Well, it's the **final** result that we must examine, we are still left with the problem of determining when we have arrived at a result that is absolutely final.

Even if this could be done, the labour expended in doing so would be found to have been utterly wasted. We should find that the action under consideration was only **one** of many factors which contributed to produce that result. And it would be very difficult to say if it was the preponderating cause.

There is no greater fallacy which has popular acceptance than that which deems an action bad because it has had a result that is undesirable, when the result is the action of another. A mother, let us say, has a refractory child to deal with and adopts the course of humouring and indulging him. This may have the effect of making him realize how naughty he has been and so bring about the desired improvement. On the other hand, it may only make him worse. Whatever happens, it can be seen that

the child's own karma has had a large part in determining his conduct.[1]

Have Good and Bad Karma any Relation to Love and Hate?

It may be suggested that the distinction between Good Karma and Bad is this: Good Karma is actuated by Love; Bad Karma, by Hate.

This proposition is much the same as the last and is found to be open to much the same objections. As in the last, the distinction seems to resolve itself into a question of object or aim. The expression, "actuated by love," surely means actuated by a desire to bring good to another by whatever it is one has an urge to do. The other part of the proposition would mean to bring harm.

Here again the objection presents itself that most of the things we do by karma are actuated by neither love nor hate. And, of those impulses that spring from love, there are many which are certainly not good. On the other hand, Courage, Tenacity, Resolution—often springing from hate—are not always bad on that account.

[1] What ways the Sage?—

And a look of despair is no guide,
It may have its ridiculous side;
It may draw you a tear,
Or a box on the ear—
You can never be sure till you've tried.

GILBERT: *The Yeomen of the Guard.*

The chief objection, however, to both these propositions is that they both look forward. But, whenever we look at Karma, we are looking backward, back to the past, and, if the differentiation between Good and Bad Karma is to be sound, it must be one that looks backward.

A Suggested Basis of Classification

It seems to me that the true difference between the two—and the difference that was in the minds of the sages of old—is this: Any impulse which is attended by a sense of the approbation and good-will of others—of the mass-being—is Good Karma; any which is attended by a sense of the opposition of others is Bad Karma.

By this I do not mean a **consciousness** of approval or opposition. This will need further explanation and, in attempting to do this, I feel that I could hardly do better than give it by way of the three *gunas* of Hindu philosophy: *Tamas*, *Rajas* and *Sattva*.

The Three *Gunas*: 1. *Tamas*

It will be observed that often an impulse evokes a sense of confusion or bewilderment and one recoils from it. The mind cannot even form a clear concept of the impulse being fulfilled by oneself. Some people, for example, when an occasion arises which

seems to require of them to address a few words to a gathering of people, even a small group of six or seven, are filled with confusion at the very thought, and recoil in horror from it. Such karma is tamasic. There are multitudes of impulses of this kind which do not get so far even as a clear concept of their being fulfilled. The minds of many people boggle at the thought of possessing a motor car. The desire is experienced in an incipient sort of way, but somehow the mind conceives subconsciously in a very indistinct way insuperable difficulties, and the impulse is immediately damped down. The difficulties are often altogether non-existent and purely imaginary. It may not be a question of money, there being no dearth of that. But the conscious mind fashions difficulties in an effort to justify a decision arrived at subconsciously. There is a subconscious sense of overwhelming and insuperable opposition, which makes one immediately smother the impulse.

Tamasic karma is as a rule brought along with one from previous lives, although it is possible for it to be created as a result of terrorization and repression, particularly at the outset of life.

2. *Rajas*

Now let us suppose a person breaks through *Tamas*. He may do so as a result of another's inspiration or through force of circumstances or, very rarely, by

virtue of that insight which the yogi seeks to develop and which enables him to see into his karmic impulses and unmask the illusion in them.

An example of the first would be this: A motherless girl has in her what I might call the raw materials of beauty, but she does not "dare" to be beautiful. She has not the courage to regard herself as attractive or call in all the usual adjuncts to beauty to set off her charms. She dresses dowdily and her natural beauty shrinks, as it were, from sight. Her subconscious pictures to her the mass-being as severely frowning down all her instincts to be attractive. Comes a certain Marius who recognizes her charms, shrinking, as they do, from the public eye, and after several encounters the conviction steals on the girl that she has attracted, that she is loved. A great change now comes over her. The mass-being seems to smile upon her—or certainly this his latest representative does. She now has the courage which would not come to her before. She now dares to be beautiful. *Tamas* is shattered.

If we can regard Karma as a stream which *Tamas* has dammed up, the example just given may be likened to the stream rushing on its way as a result of the obstruction being removed, wholly or in part.

But the stream may also burst the obstruction in consequence of being reinforced from behind. This

gives us the second way in which the inertia of *Tamas* is overcome. It is scarcely necessary to cite specific examples of this. Cases will readily recur to the reader's memory, either from actual experience or from what he has heard or read, of people being forced by circumstances into lines of activity which in normal circumstances they would have shrunk from and regarded as quite beyond their ability.

Having freed karma, one's volitional urge tends as a rule to exceed necessity, and often has no limit put to it. It seems to one that the more of one's object one has, the better, and one pursues it without limit. Karma of this nature is rajasic, whether the excess is deliberately willed or is the ungovernable impetus of past volition. When we scrutinize rajasic karma, we find that there is a subconscious sense of opposition to one's will. Subconsciously one envisages the mass-being as not countenancing one's action, but at the same time one sees in it benefits to oneself and one has a sense of one's potentiality—which is not power so much as power to power—to overbear opposition. It is the subconscious sense of the infinitude of the mass-being that produces the rajasic impulse towards **infinity.** One seems to see unending opposition to one's will, and so the volitional thrust has no limit put to it.

3. *Sattva*

There is karma of yet another kind to be considered. Very often an urge is felt which is accompanied by a sense of full concurrence of others in it. This is sattvic karma and is the ideal karma—ideal in the sense not so much of what **should be** aimed at as what actually **is** the aim of everyone. One's concept of a perfectly happy life is one in which all one's urges go forward to their fruition with the full accord of everyone else.

Remember that in sattvic karma the important thing is, not that the accord of others be actually given, but that there should be a sense of it, whether actually given or not. In looking at Karma we are, as always, looking backward, and it is past experience, not present conditions, that we find ourselves looking at. Sattvic karma is recognized more by the feel than by intellection, rather by a characteristic zest that goes with it than by any searching for distinguishing features.

Possible Misconceptions

There are two misconceptions that have possibly arisen in the reader's mind during the perusal of this chapter which it would be well to remove before going any further.

In the first place, although we have had to separate karmic impulses from one another and have

been looking at each separately, it would be quite wrong to think that as a rule—or even commonly—in the presence of a given set of conditions there is only one impulse in the mind of the karma-subject. Any one who has been introspective enough to be a spectator to his own reactions to a given stimulus will have noticed that it produces generally, not one, but two, three, or more, different impulses, which give place to one another with all the rapidity and completeness of views seen in a kaleidoscope that is kept revolving. Sometimes there are two or more impulses which are present in the mind at the same time, and one finds oneself tossed, not too pleasantly either, between them. Which of them ultimately triumphs and is turned into action depends largely on their respective strengths—which depends on one's past—and partly on one's conscious reasoning. The action that one takes, whatever it is, in its turn contributes to the shaping of future karma. Our past is ever present with us, battering incessantly on all the doors of our being, and thrice blessed is the man who knows the precise import of each of these intruders from the past and can remain serenely impassive to all their importunities, admitting, now this, now that, each in its proper time, and yielding to none a jot more than the occasion vouchsafes.

There is another possible misconception that it is necessary to put the reader on his guard against. It

must not be supposed that a tamasic impulse must of necessity give way to one that is rajasic, or that either must by the very nature of things yield to one that is sattvic.

Now Sattva prevaileth, overcoming Rajas and Tamas, O Bharata; now Rajas, overcoming Sattva and Tamas; and now Tamas, overcoming Sattva and Rajas. *Bhagavad Gita*, XIV, 10.

Good and Bad Karma Classified according to the Three *Gunas*

It seems to me that if there is any basis on which Karma can be divided into Good and Bad, it is this of the attitude, as one subconsciously sees it, of the mass-being to it. On this basis we should have no hesitation in labelling tamasic karma as bad and sattvic as good. Mind you, we must distinguish between *Akarma* which is tamasic on the one hand, and, on the other, that yielding up of karma altogether which his Dharma, and which goes beyond all the three *gunas*, beyond even *Sattva*.

Balanced in pleasure and pain, self-reliant, to whom a lump of earth, a stone and gold are alike, the same to loved and unloved, the same in honour and disgrace, the same to friend and foe, yielding up all impulses—he is said to have ***crossed beyond the Gunas.*** *Bhagavad Gita*, XIV, 24, 25.

An illustration will make the difference clear.

One finds oneself the victim of unprovoked aggression. The impulse is immediately felt to withstand it by the use of violence. But the impulse is attended by a sense of frustration or futility, a somewhat nebulous consciousness of being up against hopeless odds—not merely in the karma-object but also in the mass-being—and one submits tamely and **does nothing**. This is Cowardice—*Tamas*.

Or else, one sees the act of aggression as an insupportable outrage—and this makes one subconsciously exaggerate out of all recognition the force that one finds oneself up against—and one attacks the other in a wild fury and with mad savagery. This is Wrath—*Rajas*.

Or yet again, without underrating the other's powers, there is no exaggerated sense of the wrong done to oneself. One has a consciousness of one's ability to beat off the attack, and one proceeds to do so in a **just** measure and with the satisfaction of one who feels that what he does will be heartily approved by onlookers, the mass-being. This is Courage, but Courage-without-Passion—*Sattva*.

One may react in yet another way. One may be quite conscious of the other's strength and of the wrong one has suffered, but at the same time one may have such a full Assurance of one's power to right that wrong that one sees in it no real danger to oneself. At the same time one finds oneself, as

it were, in the heart of the offender and seeing things through his eyes. One sees how his act of aggression is but an expression of his will to life and is the outcome of error ; that the harm done to oneself is after all negligible ; and that the surest way of removing the error is one of noble forgiveness. And so one does no violence whatever to the other. This is Nobility—Dharma.

The poise and serenity of Dharma is very liable to be mistaken for the weakness of *Tamas*. But we must be careful to distinguish between them.

Tamasic karma, then is undoubtedly bad. And sattvic karma is quite as certainly good. But what about *Rajas* ? As compared with *Tamas* it is good ; as compared with *Sattva* it is bad. But in one important respect *Sattva* differs from both *Tamas* and *Rajas*. In *Sattva* the karmic impulse meets—in the subconscious—the good-will of others. In both *Tamas* and *Rajas* it seems to come up against opposition.

On this basis, then, I should regard all sattvic karma as good and all rajasic and tamasic karma as bad.

Let me remind the reader that this is not to be regarded as an ethical norm, a standard for determining whether an action that has been done or is comtemplated is right or wrong. It must not be supposed that every time one gives way to a tamasic

or a rajasic impulse one has done **wrong**; or that every time a sattvic impulse is turned into action one has done **right.**

On what grounds, then, you will want to know, is one classed as Bad Karma and the other as Good? On this ground that one traces back—it need not go very far back in time—to an event or, oftener, a course of events that was wrong, bad; and the other to one that was right, good. We may, in the light of this, define Bad Karma as any impulse that proceeds without deflection by the conscious reasoning from wrong actions of the past, actions which were actuated by a sense of hostility or just otherness as between the subject and object of it. Good Karma is that which proceeds from right actions, actions which were actuated by a sense of unity, oneness, good-will, love. **The karma-subject of the present impulse may have been either the subject or object of those past actions.**

There is another reason for the application of the terms, bad and good respectively, to these two kinds of karma. An impulse which is a part of Bad Karma brings with it a sense of pain or unpleasantness; Good Karma brings with it a pleasurable feeling, a zest.

But Karma of all kinds, tamasic, rajasic or sattvic, good or bad, has always fear at its root. The "impulse from a vernal wood" that makes you trip

along dancingly, no matter with how free a heart, has a subconscious fear right down at the root,

Now, although I have made it the acid test of Good Karma whether the karmic impulse moves forward with a sense of the concurrence of the mass-being of the subconscious, karma which satisfies the following definitions will be found, speaking by and large, to be good according to that test.

1. Karma which is actuated by love or sympathy.
2. Karma which is actuated by an impulse to help or benefit another.

The opposites of these would, of course, be found in the generality of cases to be Bad Karma according to our test.

But it must be recognized that there is a mass of things that we do karmically that cannot be put into either of these two categories or their opposites. This puts upon us the necessity of formulating a test whereby **all** Karma can be classified. And I believe that the definition I have given meets this need.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREATEST SIN OF ALL

A WELL-KNOWN tennis star once advised beginners in that game to hit the ball freely, even if they hit it into the next county; they could learn later to control their strokes so as to direct the ball how and where they wanted. But, if they started off with a holy terror of hitting the ball out of the court, their style would forever be cramped and lacking in effectiveness.

So must it be with karma. All karma must be perfectly open and hearty. Mr. Krishnamurti once said, "You must be like a good motor car, with all your machinery working quite freely, and yet with good brakes, perfectly under control." For most of us the problem is not so much that of the effectiveness of the brakes as that of getting the car to start and, when started, to keep going. Because our karma—or much of it—is clogged. Clogged by inhibitory karma, often contracted during childhood as personal karma, or else brought over from the past, or inherited as racial or class karma.

The Fallacy of Suppression

Suppression of another's karma does not of itself remove the illusion that is at the root, nor does it lessen in the very least its inherent strength, its *indriya*. In the case of one whose age and reasoning powers allow of it, opposition to one's karma often makes one look into one's conduct and see the folly of it; as a result, one resolves to abandon that particular karma. But quite as often it makes one stiffen one's will and either redouble one's efforts to secure one's ends or secretly resolve to feed fat one's desires as soon as a favourable opportunity shall present itself. *Indriya*, far from being destroyed, is reinforced.

With children, however, especially very young children, suppression has effects which are far more terrible. Let us closely watch what happens when a person sets out with a strong determination to crush a child's will.

Picture an infant, in most respects just an average child, but with eyes of unfathomable depths, eyes in which one seems to see those

High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised.

Introduce into the picture a mother of a not altogether unusual kind; unsympathetic, severe, hard, the type of woman who treats her child as an unwelcome encumbrance and finds that the easiest

way of dealing with it is suppressing it, making herself as formidable as possible to the child and stifling any of its activities that irk her. If the child cries, she thunders at him or otherwise terrorizes him into silence. Still worse does it fare with him if he exhibits any sign of temper. She deliberately and definitely breaks his spirit, treating his little show of mettle as of immense magnitude, delivering herself of the opinion that it is utterly fatal not to stamp out even to its last embers any signs of a fiery temper in a child.

But how does all this appear to the little fellow? He comes sooner or later to have a sense of being beset by an ogress, in whose power he finds himself. At first the savagery of his unnatural parent only serves to make him cry all the louder, which in turn makes her redouble her efforts to silence him; and soon his little soul is seized with a terror that paralyses him and makes his young eyes start from their sockets and his cries to choke in his throat. She has triumphed.

Need we follow every step of the process by which it comes about in due course that the very sound of her voice makes his little soul contract and renders him moveless with fear? Very soon the impulse to protest aloud conjures up of itself a vision and dread of his parent, and the impulse is stifled almost as soon as born. Last stage of all, the very impulse

smothers itself with a dull, sickening sense of dread.

An eddy has come into being in which he is helplessly caught and swirled whenever he comes up on the edge of it; a karmic wheel, a cycle of thought, feeling, volition and action, has been formed to which he finds himself painfully bound.

And now the mother may be removed from the scene altogether. Inhibition will follow so soon upon the urge to assert himself that the child may grow to manhood and old age and go to his grave without disabusing his subconscious mind of the illusion of being beset by a savage presence ever waiting to descend on him should he make the least attempt to show spirit.

Years hence a grown-up man will find that indignities are heaped upon him but leave him moveless and paralysed.

Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat
As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
Ha!
Swounds, I should take it, for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this

I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal.

He'll find it impossible to give vent to the feelings that are in his breast, to exclaim out against the afflictions that assail him and the injustice and cruel malignity that beset him, or to weep his overburdened soul out. And he'll wonder why.

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba
That he should weep for her? What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing.

Perhaps you may say that mothers of such a kind have never been and cannot be. But that would not be true. I do not maintain that we are to presume that the infant Hamlet had exactly this sort of treatment, nor that he had it at the hands of his mother. The care of the young prince would largely be in the hands of a nurse. But Hamlet has certainly been repressed in his childhood, and the

blame rests ultimately with his mother. Nor is he blind to the fact: he tells the Queen,

Would it were not so!—you are my mother.

It may seem absurd to treat Hamlet, Queen Gertrude, and the rest, all figments of a poet's brain —or should we not say, "**the** Poet's"—as if they had been historical characters, and to speculate about that part of their life that lies outside the period of the play. But, with Shakespeare, the story does not commence with the rising of the curtain or end with its fall. Shakespeare's characters—how often has it been said!—are as much instinct with life as the people we encounter in our daily round and, like the latter, carry about with them in all that they do the imperishable record of their past. As the play proceeds, their previous life is unfolded as vividly as if it were fully represented in the action. In every word and movement of **every one** of Shakespeare's heroines the story repeats itself of a happy and cherished childhood, of a human flower slowly unfolding in the radiance and glow of parental love and understanding. Each of them has had a father who idolized her and prized her as earth's richest jewel. It is only thus that heroines are made. When Lear, his heart wrenched in anguish, utters in his dying whisper,

Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!

what do you think passes across his mind?—the Queen of France coming to his aid? No, it is his sunny-haired little girl, with her soft, sweet voice—her voice was ever soft, gentle and low—scampering out to greet him on his return home from affairs of state. It is this little child that he sees dead before him, that gentle voice silent for evermore.

No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all?

The end and the beginning meet, and so pass into the unknown.

Shakespeare gives us no scene showing Desdemona and Brabantio together prior to her taking the fateful step of marrying the Moor. But from what Brabantio says **of** her and what he says **to** her in their final scene together, one that is painful to all present but an agony to him, we have no doubt of the passionate love he had for his child. Betrayed and dishonoured, as he feels himself to have been by her, he still calls her by that name which he was evidently accustomed to use in speaking to her—"Jewel."

It is the same with all the rest,—Prospero, Leonato, Cymbeline, and the others—all of them are shown as filled with a great and intense love for the daughters who were later to blossom into those

peerless types of noble womanhood—Shakespeare's heroines.

Cruelty Scathingly Denounced by the World's Greatest Seers

It is the systematic crushing of a child's spirit that our Lord denounces in such emphatic terms in what is probably the most arresting passage in the Bible:

And whoso shall receive one such child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew, XVIII, 5, 6.

The Greek word that is here translated "offend" means "to make to stumble," "to throw an obstacle in one's way." To "offend," then, using the word in the sense it has in this passage and elsewhere, has the idea of obstructing, or holding up movement. To "offend one of these little ones" is the terrible crime of not only preventing a child from doing something that it is in the habit of doing, but of so treating it as to implant in it a rooted horror of ever doing it again. Pain is inflicted repeatedly with the deliberate object of inflicting pain and of making the victim recoil from the urge to do the particular thing that constitutes the habit

in question. A deliberate jamming of another's karma.

This is the most heinous offence that it is possible to commit and one that has disastrous effects on both the victim and the doer. Mr. Leadbeater records that the Lord Maitreya said, in reference to a case of terrible cruelty to a child,

In our eyes there is ***no greater crime*** *than thus to check the progress of a soul.*

The Masters and the Path, p. 86.

The words in bold type do not appear thus in the original. But they should.

Again, in *At the Feet of the Master* we are told :

Intentional cruelty is purposely to give pain to another living being ; and that is the ***greatest of all sins***—*the work of a devil rather than a man. You would say that no man could do such a thing ; but men have done it often, and are daily doing it now. The inquisitors did it ; many religious people did it in the name of religion. Vivisectors do it ; many schoolmasters do it habitually. All these people try to excuse their brutality by saying that it is custom ; but a crime does not cease to be a crime because many commit it. Karma takes no account of custom ; and the karma of cruelty is the* ***most terrible of all.***

It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Better for **him**, mark you, for

the perpetrator. Our Lord is not speaking in wrath, announcing what He would like to do to him. He is making a statement of fact. It would be a merciful providence that wiped such a man completely and effectively out of existence if in so doing it prevented him from incurring the results of such a crime.

But we are not at the moment concerned with the nature of those results. Our attention must be given to the effects which deterrent cruelty has on the victim. He grows up with a sort of paralysis of spirit, a condition which may last the whole of his life and even into succeeding lives.

Removing Inhibitory Karma

Inhibitory karma can be removed by another person who has an understanding of the situation and sufficient humanity to undertake the work by reversing the conditions to which the subject has been accustomed and treating him with extreme kindness and indulgence. But it is unfortunate that one who has been the victim of injustice and cruelty becomes an easy target for similar treatment at the hands of all and sundry.

Or else, the subject may himself burn it away in "the fire of wisdom" in the same way as rajasic karma is burnt away, that is, by discovering the origin of it, seeing the mistake or illusion that keeps

it alive, correcting that, and so breaking up the karma.

When either of the above is done, the inhibited karma will be released, and the odds are that it will be found to have gathered force by having been pent up. The labour of sacrificing it will then be found to be greater than it would have been ordinarily. Deterrent cruelty, therefore, far from stopping karma, adds to its strength and makes it last longer than it would have done in ordinary circumstances.

Karma whose operation is obstructed by other karma, leading to fruits of a contrary nature, lasts a long time. *Vedanta Sutras.*

But in the meantime, till either another's kindness or one's own wisdom comes to one's aid, what happens? If the inhibited karma is weak, the probability of any consequences graver than those already mentioned is not great. But, if the karma is strong, there is the possibility, amongst other things, of the incidence of insanity. If the subject attempts to make the inhibited karma break through the inhibition, he sets two forces acting on the brain from opposite directions and often causes a lesion of the brain.

Hamlet just escapes insanity by not pressing, as it were, on his karma. Ophelia is less fortunate. She is "offended," though in a somewhat different way.

Ophelia's Case

The Ophelia that we meet is not a woman, but a marionette, the strings of which are in the hands of Polonius. It is easy to see how the woman has been suppressed and this puppet produced in its place. We can easily imagine the pragmatical, interfering Polonius forever busy in controlling the actions of his wife and children in all their details, treating them, not as separate beings with their own potentialities for good, but as extensions of himself, to be controlled by the brain and the desires and the will that dwell in him. He is of the class of people whose faith cannot be shaken that nothing was well done that they did not have the control of. Polonius has a strong determination, and with one so possessed it is not very difficult to control others, especially children, in all the minutiae of their life; all that is needed besides is a settled insensibility or what Ruskin calls "vulgarity."

Simple and innocent vulgarity is merely an untrained and undeveloped bluntness of body and mind; but in true inbred vulgarity, there is a dreadful callousness, which, in extremity, becomes capable of every sort of bestial habit and crime, without fear, without pleasure, without horror, and without pity. It is in the blunt hand and the dead heart, in the diseased habit, in the hardened conscience, that men become vulgar; they are for ever vulgar, precisely in

proportion as they are incapable of sympathy—of quick understanding—of all that, in deep insistence on the common, but most accurate term, may be called the "tact" or "touch-faculty" of body and soul. *Sesame and Lilies.*

The worst feature of this "mental cruelty" to a child by blocking up its will is that it is so utterly unnecessary. What the child wants to do is probably something so trivial as to be innocent of the least suspicion of harm to anyone. But its own desires and inclinations, where they conflict with the father's, are treated as bad for no other reason than that. The child has the mortification of having its will suppressed where an exercise of it would not be in the least prejudicial to its parent, who, nevertheless, just closes his eyes and his heart and goes on insisting that the child shall do exactly what he wants. How well we know his shibboleths: "**I'm** master in this house and you'll do what **I** want," or, "It's not what **you** want; it's what **I** want."

In utter weariness of spirit the child gives up the unequal struggle and does what is required of her. Her will gradually atrophies, and the grown woman finds herself with no will of her own.

It is in her emaciated will that Ophelia falls short of being a heroine, and it is because of this that she fails Hamlet in his sorest need in one of the most

poignant scenes in all Shakespeare—one that is so soul-searching that the author did not trust any actors to represent it on the stage and just gave us Ophelia's harrowing account of it.

The stricken Hamlet finds himself bolted out of the body corporate of the Danish court, of mankind, of Life. If he could but get the understanding, honour, and support of any one of them, the world would be entirely changed for him. Ophelia is his only hope. In a torment he paces up and down, racked to know whether she would open her heart to him and range herself on his side, or whether she would shrink in alarm from such a step. After hours probably of tossing between decision and indecision he makes up his mind to stake all on the possibility of Ophelia's love and support. And so—

with his doublet all unbrac'd
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

Her great heart no doubt rises in sympathy, but the next moment something snaps and her spirit collapses, and she looks on, mute and paralysed, utterly helpless to do anything.

But, although her will is broken, her sweet discernment is not overshadowed by her father, her heart still beats in its own fine tempo.

Oph. *O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown :*
The courtier's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword ;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down !
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells, jangled, out of tune and harsh ;
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy ; O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see !

Did she have any suspicion that her own noble mind would soon totter and crash ? Probably not. There was only one with sufficient head and heart to see that. " To a nunnery, go ; and quickly too," Hamlet tells her. In the out-of-joint world in which they find themselves, of intrigue and plot and counterplot, of selfishness so stiff and unyielding that it creates currents and cross currents of unexampled baseness and cruelty, Ophelia cannot long survive. She is like a vessel, whose engines have been put out of service, towed helplessly along.

When the connection is severed, she finds herself without any will or volition of her own, helpless against the immensely strong forces playing on her, and overwhelmed by them in an instant; without any initiative or spontaneity of her own, her reason, when called upon to deal with them, immediately breaks under the strain and becomes "like sweet bells jangled".

The Grave Responsibilities of Those Who Have the Care of the Young

These are not very pleasant pictures, I admit, and it may seem that parents are given undue prominence and that the colours are laid on with unwarranted extravagance. I do not intend by any means that the father and mother here portrayed should be regarded as common; but it must be admitted that there **are** fathers and mothers like them. My reason for putting parents in the foreground is because they, far more than anyone else, have opportunities of "offending" children. One or other of them—it depends partly on which is the stronger character and partly on national practice in this matter which —is the child's supreme court of appeal; and a court that makes its own laws. It is because of their almost unlimited powers over their children that they are enabled to cause a child to go through life a bundle of inhibitions.

I do not suggest for a moment that these powers should be curtailed by law or hedged in in any way. The golden age cannot be legislated into being. If it could, it would have been ushered in ages since, because man has taxed his ingenuity long enough to legislate his fellow men into perfection. But laws are nine-tenths negative and repressive, and one-tenth positive; and the whole of this chapter has been devoted to an attempt to show that the natural urges of man **cannot** be effectively repressed out of existence.

School teachers, especially those in boarding schools, nurses and governesses, have a power over children exceeded only by that of parents. But anyone who is entrusted with the care of a child or into whose power a child comes—the elder boys or girls in boarding schools, for instance—is put thereby in a position of grave responsibility.

The Fallacy of Countering Karma with Like Karma

People excuse their conduct by saying, "You must make children realise that you are their master or else they'll climb on your head." But that is a great mistake, a mistake that is part of the illusion at the root of this particular karma of being domineering. Somebody—child or grown-up—manifests a will somewhat at variance with one's own in something that is so entirely insignificant that one

cannot help seeing how little it matters. But subconsciously one seems to see it as something immense and formidable, and the conscious mind, which cannot entertain the illusion in this form, translates it as referring to the future and sees the immensity as a future possibility. One assumes that the child's karma, if not checked, will keep on gathering force indefinitely. But that is just where the mistake lies. The initial strength of the particular karma is a measure of the opposition that the child expects. If it meets with no opposition whatever, the strength of the karma will probably increase up to a certain point, after which it will decrease.

The illusion in karma makes a person exaggerate the strength of the forces ranged against him. If one proceeds to turn this into reality and actually offers all this opposition and more, one's opponent, far from relaxing his efforts, will redouble them. But if we can make him see that he is making a mistake, that there is no opposition whatever offered him, he is quite likely to yield up his karma. It is with this principle in mind that our Lord gives us the advice which, of all pieces in holy writ, has been the most misunderstood.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite

thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. *Matthew*, V, 38-9.

Our Lord's meaning is explicit: "Resist not evil". Offer no opposition: that is the surest and most effective way of ending evil. He certainly does **not** mean: "Encourage your opponent to commit further evil," notwithstanding the English translation of the passage. "Turn to him the other also" should be "Let the other also be turned to him". This makes all the difference in the world. Far from offering resistance to anyone who shall strike thee on one cheek, make no effort to protect yourself; let the other cheek also remain unprotected and exposed to him. **Not;** Invite him to strike the other also. No one of Christ's supreme wisdom would enjoin conduct so utterly foolish.

The Lord Buddha gives advice that is on all fours with what Christ tells us.

Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule.

Dhammapada, I, 5.

And it is often surprising how soon hatred ceases in this way. The action that our Lord enjoins is one that many a person in a moment of supreme nobility has risen to—sometimes with a result that has amazed him. Standing up defenceless to his aggressor he has found that the latter appeared to have been bereft of the power to strike him. Of

course, the mere offering of no resistance is not sufficient to produce this result; there must be an entire absence of fear, and so an entire absence of hatred.

If this is to be one's conduct in dealing with adults, how much more so should it be one's conduct in dealing with children, of whom one need have no fear!

The principle holds not only in the case of the karma of wrath, but all karma. When children are greedy, or miserly with their possessions, or unseemly in the loudness of their laughter or their exuberance of spirits, to coerce them into doing what one regards as the right thing serves no purpose. Must one then just allow them to do what they like? The *Bhagavad Gita* gives us the answer.

Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people attached to karma, but, himself acting in a balanced manner, let him lead them to act likewise.

III, 26.

It is not sufficient merely to close one's eyes to children's behaviour and remain passive. One must recover one's own balance, in doing which one makes it easy for the child to recover his. If, for example, a child is excessively loud and noisy in its talk, one should allow oneself to feel as the child does: that is, see that it makes an exaggerated estimate of the opposition offered to its efforts to make itself heard;

see that a much quieter tone is quite sufficient; maybe, point this out quietly to the child; and continue to maintain a quiet tone oneself, or else be silent without losing one's poise.

Honour Thy Children

It is fatal to regard children as being in their essential nature bad, and as sure to go on getting worse and worse unless and until they are corrected; or to treat them as just emptiness waiting to be filled by their elders. Prominent in the Mosaic canon is the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." But there is a law, omitted from the decalogue, which is equally important: "Honour thy children." Recognize that their potentialities for good are no less than yours; that their capabilities of head and heart and hand are all there and only need protection from outside interference; they do not need to be planted there or grafted on.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. *Matthew*, XVIII, 10.

"Angel" is used in the same sense as "genius" was sometimes used, as in the passage in Macbeth,

Under him my ***genius*** *is rebuked, as it is said Mark Antony's was by Caesar.*

Wordsworth, in a passage which is in part reminiscent of what our Lord tells us, addresses the following beautiful words to childhood :

Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind—
.....
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by.

The Heritage of Childhood

Children, besides having all the potentialities that grown-ups have, have something in addition which their elders ordinarily do **not** have, something that is vital to that happiness which is the essence of " heaven."

Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for ***of such is the kingdom of heaven.***

And, again,

Except ye be as little children ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is this key to the kingdom of heaven possessed by children and lost by grown-ups ? Wordsworth tells us :

Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height.

It is this heaven-born freedom of soul that differentiates children from adults. Ordinarily, a child's karma is free and without inhibition; it does what it likes without restraint. It is this utter lack of restraint that is the essence of heavenly bliss.

All karma must be made perfectly free from the least trace whatsoever of inhibition.

The attainment of Truth consists in ***unfolding life and giving to it the fullest possible scope for expression.*** *. . . Men may seek freedom on many paths: but at the end life will force them to turn to the true path of understanding that lies within themselves. Happiness will never come to you from outside, it must be born within yourself.*

J. KRISHNAMURTI

A large amount of the karma of all of us is clogged to an extent that it would surprise us to know. The organic functions are clogged amongst other things, and become increasingly so with advancing years. It is this clogging of the functions that brings on all the features associated with old age. By opening up karma we are enabled to stay to some extent the pressure of accumulating years. If we can make all karma perfectly free and easy-running and "be as little children," we shall have laid the foundations of that seemingly eternal youth which we are told the Great Ones enjoy.

CHAPTER XV

THE RELEASE OF KARMA

IT is interesting to look into the human mind and try to discover what the concept is of the state or condition towards which all one's being seems to move and in the realization of which one anticipates perfect happiness. It is given to very few to be able to look into other people's minds, but each of us can put his own under close and intense observation and examine the picture in it of what seems to him the ideal state of things. The picture will vary very considerably with different people, but there are certain features which it is sure to possess. One is Freedom. Another is Honour. One pictures oneself as living in a world in which one's life knows no fetters, and yet in one's picture all that one does never fails to meet with the good-will and even the esteem of the society in which one finds oneself, a society amongst the members of which there is perfect fellowship and harmony.

For a very large number of us this is not merely a dream but a goal towards which our steps are very

definitely and purposefully directed, although we are not agreed as to the direction we must take in our quest. The vast majority see their goal in another world **apart** from this—Heaven or Valhalla or some such place. But the fact of reincarnation puts such a hope altogether out of court. This is our world and it will always be our world. If our dream is to be fulfilled, it must be here and in this world with which we are all so familiar.

Moreover it **is** capable of fulfilment here—certainly in everything that matters. And it is the purpose of this chapter to discover how one's dreams can be brought to come true, how all karma can be freed and all one's pent-up urges, aims and ambitions can find their consummation and yet in such a way as to win the approval and esteem of one's fellows.

But wait a moment. There's somebody wanting to raise an objection: "If karmic impulses spring from illusion, why should all obstacles be cleared from before them so that they may go on their way freely? Should they not rather be obstructed as effectively as possible?"

Strangely enough, it is **because** of its illusory origin that karma must be freed. Rather, it is because of the swiftness with which the illusion overwhelms one. Emotion and volition follow instantaneously upon illusion and one finds oneself out of balance, straining towards a set of conditions in

which alone one sees that balance as recoverable. All karma—as the subconscious sees things—is an urge from death to life, from a condition of things in which one sees death for oneself towards another in which one sees life. And as long as that urge is obstructed, one feels oneself to be not truly in Life.

One cannot attain fullness of happiness until every bit of one's karma is entirely freed from all that clogs it. I refer not only to what I might call the bigger karmas, but also to the very smallest. In so many little things that people do there is a sense of constraint: in their walk, in the articulation of their words, even in the way they sneeze or cough and in their very breathing. And if one watches oneself, one finds the same lack of freedom, the same sense of being cramped, in the little things one is constantly doing. We shall never be perfectly happy until all this is made quite free, until our karma is released in its entirety.

This does not mean that every single urge we experience must find its fulfilment in action. An urge can be fulfilled **without** its being turned into action. As I have said often enough, every karmic urge is a straining towards Life. And it is fulfilled only when one attains that. But one often does this without the urge being pushed to its consummation, when one realizes that one is in Life without

it. By freeing karma, then, I do not mean necessarily the actual doing of karma, but putting oneself in a position in which one feels that nothing stands between one and the object of the karmic urge.

There are four ways in which the inhibited karma in our being can be set free. I should rather say, there are four parts or components of the one way. Because, whatever way we take, all the four parts are present, although not in the same strength, one part generally being predominant and obscuring the others more or less, with the result that there appear to be four entirely different ways. These are

1. The Way of the Head,
2. The Way of the Heart,
3. The Way of the Will,
4. The Way of Action.

1. The Way of the Head

Our first object is to discover the reason why so much of one's karma is clogged, to examine the feeling of frustration and futility which strangles it at its birth, to scrutinize the origin and nature of the "custom" that lies upon us "with a weight heavy as frost and deep almost as life."

I know that many of my readers will tend to be somewhat impatient of all this dissection and scrutiny of the microscopic. But I assert—and the reader will recognize the truth of what I say—that the power

of the infinitesimal, the "Mighty Atom," is so immense as to force on us the unavoidable necessity of keeping it constantly and fully under observation —as indeed we do to a large extent in matters connected with our physical health by means of the microscope. But the same watchfulness over the microscopic is of even greater value to our spiritual health and life. Nor, once one has got the hang of things, is it any more difficult or tiring than that of the bacteriologist in his sphere. I maintain that no one will ever reach liberation from all the ills of the spirit until every motion of the spirit, even the most minute, is visible to him fully and clearly. It is in this firm befief that I am at such pains to vivisect our mental processes in an effort to lay each quivering part open to view in order to see exactly how it functions.

Difficulty of Discerning Impulses

When one starts to set free one's impulses, one finds oneself at the very outset up against what seems an insurmountable difficulty: that of determining with certainty and accuracy what one's natural urges really are. Inhibitory karma is such that it not only brings a damper down on the impulses of the heart, but it does this so quickly that often one cannot get to see what it was one had an impulse to do.

Self-Scrutiny

There is but one way of overcoming this and it is not very easy. It consists in keeping a very careful watch over oneself. Set aside a short period of time for this purpose, say twenty minutes or so at the beginning or end of the day or, better, both. Sit down during this period and visualize yourself as about your normal daily occupations, not only your regular vocation, but also all that you do at home and in your social circle. Observe how you behave and what your reactions are to the things that are said and done during an average day. If one perseveres in this, one comes in course of time to develop an introspective habit of mind that remains active right through the day and enables one to observe accurately one's own and other people's reactions to things at the very time they occur.

Repressions

Our next task, in pursuit of our purpose, is to be particularly observant of those reactions—or repressions of reactions—which consist of impulses that are still-born or die almost as soon as born, strangled at birth by inhibitory karma. One must be quick to observe what the appearance of the impulse was during the fleeting moment before it was smothered. This is extremely difficult, because, by the time the introspective faculty is collected, so to speak, and

brought to bear on what we want to observe, the latter is only a memory. Or not even that, being so fleeting as to leave but the faintest impression on the consciousness. But while that slight impression is still fresh, one can create again in imagination the stimulus and "with more advised watch" observe what the impulses are which are born of the stimulus, to be stifled as soon as they appear in the consciousness —or subconsciousness. Persevere in this practice of keeping a watch on yourself, even if it be from no other interest but just an academic one, and you will be amazed when you discover what an amount of one's nature is thrust underground with all its latent power for good and for evil.

Of course, among the impulses that break the surface of consciousness and sink almost immediately out of sight will be found quite a few to give vent to which would immediately qualify one for correction at the hands of the law; or which, if not illegal, are against the accepted code of honourable conduct. Others again will be of a nature which make them physically impossible to fulfil, such as the yearning for "the wings of a dove, to rove far away, in the wilderness build me a nest, and remain there forever at rest." We shall put these on one side for the moment and confine our attention to those inward stirrings of one's being which are kept under, not because they are illegal,

dishonourable or impracticable, but simply for want of "daring."

Discovering the Origins of Repressive Tendencies

Having discovered what the repressed urges of the heart are, one must next observe what the nature of the repression is and the reason for it. An acute and discerning mind comes sooner or later to perceive that—like the urge itself—it is nothing but one's past that is still very much alive, ever present and in close contact with one, that the impulse to do this or that often goes back countless millenia before its origin is discoverable and that the repressive urge springs from a fear of deterrents which were very real in the past, not necessarily very remote, but are more or less imaginary to-day and yet keep us from self-expression.

One may find, for example, that one has a tendency to shrink from responsibility, from leadership of men—by which I do not mean necessarily mankind as a whole or any large section of it, but any grouping of men, even a very small one. One has a secret urge to leadership and in one's day-dreaming one often sees oneself as the hub about which a good bit of human existence turns. Nevertheless, as soon as an actual occasion arises when one finds responsible leadership in even a small way being thrust upon one, one shrinks from it. Nay, without the occasion

having actually arisen, even when one imagines oneself as having the responsibility for anything specific, any new way of thinking of which one is the author, any course of action proceeding from one's own brain, the instinct to quit immediately manifests itself. Leadership in the abstract one aspires to, but when it resolves itself into leadership in something definite, specific, and known, one shirks it.

The same instinct will be found to smother other urges of self-expression. One finds that, with all the means at one's disposal to enable one to possess good things, the impulse to do so never seems to find expression—in fact, seldom even makes its presence sufficiently felt in full consciousness. One seems to content oneself with things second-hand or of inferior quality, "abject orts and imitations, out of use and staled by other men."

Not altogether content either. But the thought of one's possessing things that are really worth while and such as would be the envy of others somehow cannot find lodgment in one's mind. And when one comes to examine the reason why, one finds that as soon as one visualizes oneself as in possession of anything really desirable, it immediately conjures up in the mind a thought—or, rather, a subconsciousness, not very clear and definite, but recognizable nevertheless after careful scrutiny—of others, in

whose power one feels oneself to be, frowning down any such ambition on one's part. And one immediately drops the idea.

Realism

Now we may set about to remedy this partly by a certain positive idealism and partly by a negativing realism.

The realism would consist in catching the mind at the point where it tends to duck before the unfriendly mass-being of one's imagination, and reminding oneself of its non-existence; and so, disillusioning oneself of the bogey that frowns down all one's natural impulses. This is far more difficult to do than to describe and requires patient and persevering endeavour. To this end let us add another exercise to be done during the period set aside for introspective scrutiny. We have learnt, let us say, to observe the impulses of our hearts and have discovered what they are. We have carried our investigation further and found ourselves looking into the face of the bogeyman whose frown paralysed us into inaction. We have scrutinized this being carefully and made the very important discovery that it is lifeless, that the set scowl is that of a corpse, dead we know not how long. Our immediate task is to bury it—or, better still, burn it—and get it decently out of sight.

Sit down then and, allowing your imagination to present you with the appropriate stimuli, observe again what the impulses of your being are. Or let your memory recall the baulked impulses of yesterday, baulked, not by any visible obstruction from without, but by your own self-suppression. If you are observant, you will probably have remarked quite a number of seemingly insignificant things which you might not think worth taking further notice of when they occur, or digging out of your memory when past—an inhibited manifestation of joy, a choked tear, a show of regard or affection, suppressed as soon as conceived. There is none of them so small as to be negligible, but the *modus operandi* of releasing karma would perhaps be more easily understood and, strangely enough, more easily applied in the first instance, in dealing with bigger things. Let us say that you have an ambition to be a public speaker and have chosen a walk in life in which ability as such is a prime necessity. But you recall how yesterday when you had to present a gathering of people with your views, as soon as you opened your mouth to speak, you got flustered and found yourself quite incapable of collecting more than two or three of that splendid array of thoughts you had intended to go over in review. Now try and visualize the whole scene and let the sensations of the moment be again as lively in your mind as they

were then. The scene that you will re-enact will be found to be very much as follows: You get up to speak; but the first words you utter make you suddenly conscious of yourself and the mere consciousness of your own being seems to conjure up a sense of powerful and hostile entities—the mass-being—ready to bear down upon you, and you find yourself agitated and impelled by a great desire to get as quickly out of view as possible.

Let me repeat that the karmic illusion is one that we bring with us from the past, and in the present instance it tends to take the form of a sense of being bayed about by a number of learned and critical people and of yourself being a very weak creature, presenting some extremely thin and futile ideas on a subject to which you are an absolute newcomer. It is this that fills your mind and prevents you from focussing it on the points of your discourse as you had arrayed them beforehand.

Now see if you can disabuse your mind of the obsession by maintaining presence of mind—mind of the present. Remind yourself that the people around you are quite average, are friendly, and are eager to hear what you have to say. With this constantly in mind you can go on to say all you have to without getting flustered, taking point by point and putting each clearly and succinctly to your audience. Now repeat this again, and yet

again. Remember you are in the seclusion of your own room and that your audience is imaginary and will not object to your repeating your talk. I attach great importance, when one is trying to learn a thing, to the repetition and re-repetition of it as soon as one succeeds in getting it right.

Idealism

In attempting to give in outline an example of what I have called " negativing realism "—" negativing," because it dispels illusions; and " realism," because it tackles problems which we have to face, it deals with realities—I have found it impossible to avoid entrenching upon what I have called " positive idealism."

But I use this expression to mean something much fuller than what has been touched upon in the preceding paragraphs.

Before I proceed to describe it, let me make a prefatory remark. Since all bad karma, all those habits of mind which make us feel ourselves to be in the midst of hostile entities, is the result of recurring experiences of the past, by creating in our minds and repeating again and again a train of thought in which one sees oneself in the opposite set of conditions, surrounded by friendliness and respect, one tends to set up a habit of thought which, although it would not have the strength of the

other, would, if one maintains one's presence of mind, give an anchorage when one finds oneself being swept away by karma.

The main idea, it will be seen, is to picture oneself as an accepted and honoured member of a society representing the best elements in life and, as such, giving oneself full freedom in the expression of one's nature without fear of being misunderstood.

Let us assume that one has already discovered one's inhibitions and seen clearly where an impulse would have led one if one had not clapped a self-repressive hand down upon it. Now it is not very difficult to imagine oneself as doing what one might have done but for the repression, acting freely and openly and yet without rousing the resentment of others—in fact, winning their liking and esteem. Or, if one has any difficulty in doing this, there is always sure to be someone whose behaviour in that respect fulfils one's ideal. As a matter of fact, it's generally as a result of seeing another's vigour and freedom of self-expression that one's attention is drawn to one's own self-interment. You meet a man, no better endowed than you by nature, either in intellect, education, or social advantage, whom you find turning his ideas into readable magazine articles, and so, through the medium of his writings, scattering them far afield, while the ideas that sparkle in your own brain fall back into obliviscence—now let

that dictionary be!—because your urge to communicate them to others in a manner which would make them clear and unmistakable is never turned into action. You meet another who is the "life and soul of the party," a living fountain from whom vitality and spirits flow to all around, while the vitality and life with which you feel yourself to be brimming over fall back into the depths of your being or find expression only by a sort of pale reflection.

Whatever motion of your being it may be that you are stirred by example or pressure from within to give an opening to—it may be lofty of purpose, it may be simple and ephemeral in its objective—it is well to do so systematically and effectively and not by fits and starts.

During the time set apart for silent meditation take your ideal and live it in your imagination, going carefully through every step of the action, and whenever you observe a tendency to recoil or draw back, correct it and let your will go freely with the released urge. Try always to keep in your mind the idea of others welcoming and appreciating your action.

Power of Suggestion, Even if Involuntary

There is immense power in suggestion by thought, even if it is involuntary and only half-conscious. If what you do has met with opposition or derision,

close observation will show that it is often largely because the thought of opposition or derision took form in your own mind first. It devolves upon one, then, to counteract this habit of mind by forming one in which one sees the mass-being of the subconscious, not as unfriendly, critical and severe, but as somebody who is sympathetic, understanding and appreciative of all that is good in one and of what one says and does.

2. The Way of the Heart

Now when one pictures oneself in such conditions, living and moving and having one's entire existence in a world that is truly idyllic, meeting always with the good-will, understanding and esteem of one's fellows, when one, I say, removes from one's consciousness all knowledge or memory of the world as we know it—or imagine we do—and pictures oneself in this dream-world, one of the first changes that one observes is in one's own nature. One finds oneself doing only that which will meet with the approval and good-will of others, indefatigably and minutely solicitous of their wishes and feelings. Moreover, one sees oneself as having the esteem of others only because one has earned it, that is, one sees oneself fulfilling a vital function in the social organism.

The two parts of the picture appear to be complementary—and necessary to each other. One

enjoys freedom of expression, freedom of Life, only because of the knowledge that one's life and activity are seen by others to be useful to their own; and one seeks to make the latter all the more so to ensure greater freedom of expression. We have in this one of the usual karmic cycles of cause and effect, the effect causing the original cause as an effect of itself.

The motions of one's spirit are given greater freedom, but at the same time are directed to the common good and shaped so as to meet with the general accord, the welcoming smile of the mass-being. To this end there is no faculty so useful as a sensitized heart, a delicate sympathy, a finely attuned responsiveness to the inward thoughts and feelings of others.

The Wheel of Good Karma

Nor do the benefits of this "tact"—I am thinking of Ruskin's use of the word[1]—flow only in one direction, outwards from one. The blessing, like every other, is twice blest, surging back again with the same force as it surged outwards. Because the same condition of being finely and accurately attuned to the feelings of others helps one to see without the intrusion of karmic illusion what others really think of oneself. It is the antidote to that

[1] See the last four lines of the quotation on p. 217.

self-love that makes one "taste with a distempered appetite and mistake bird-bolts for cannon-bullets." By its possession and use the barriers that hedge one in are broken up and one's nature finds itself given an unaccustomed freedom.

It is essential, of course, not merely to have tenderness of heart, but also that one should give heed to its promptings. No single tightening of the heart strings should be ignored or go unheeded.

If one feels the mass-being to be hostile, it is partly because one has made it so by treating it with "otherness". Every single action that is done to another with a feeling that he is "another" and not one with oneself adds to that sense of otherness and hostility in the mass-being. Every single act that we do to another as to oneself makes the mass-being of the subconscious more kindly disposed to one and so makes it easier for one to give expression to one's nature with a nearer approach to wholeheartedness. You would like the world to be all yours: it is only by putting into it as into something that is your own, and not by taking out of it, that you will feel it to be yours. One cannot lay too much emphasis upon the necessity of good works as a means to salvation, liberation, detachment from the bonds of Karma. It seems paradoxical that doing should be a means to establish Dharma, which is detachment from doing. But it

is only when we feel we have the full approval of others for what we do—or, better, when we feel that it is always and fully open to us to do a particular thing—that we can with complete equanimity set aside the urge to do it. We can truly sacrifice only what we have, not what we have not.

Good karma moves in circles just as bad karma does. An action done towards another which is actuated by a sense of his friendliness, oneness, tends to make him behave in like manner towards oneself, which, in its turn, disposes one to good karma towards him.

The same cyclism (or cyclicism, which is it?—I mean "tendency to move in cycles", not **on** cycles) is found in good karma where the karma-object is not an individual, but a group, little or great. The consciousness that one fulfils an important function in the social organism, large or small, and that society is conscious of, and acknowledges, its indebtedness to one, is an asset of the greatest value in opening up one's karma. The mass-being in the subconscious takes on an affable and congenial countenance and that makes it easier for one to express one's nature. A piece of good karma tends to leaven all other karma. The acceptance of the former as such has the effect of making one tone down the rough edges of the latter so as to make it acceptable to them.

But a consciousness of public service done, even if not recognized, has far-reaching effects on one's karma and one's destiny. Fierce vexation mixes with grief at the thought of all the precious lives that are being sacrificed in this terrible war in an effort to save our fair civilization from becoming the toy of a ruthless despot, to be pulled to pieces and made the subject of whatever experimentation his whim should suggest. But, to him that has given his life in a great cause, it is not loss, but gain. Surely he is fully conscious that in giving his life—the heroism with which he sacrificed it may have been altogether unwitnessed—he has had his share in defending his people and all that they hold most dear. And this gives him more than anything else can a sense of the share he has in it all, the sweet feeling of "my people, my country, my fair world." In some home, we know not where, we know not when, a child will begin life who will be so much the nobler for a great act of nobility that ended another life, so much the braver for the courage shown here, so much the more conscious of having a share in all that he is heir to and in which his people take such pride. And when you know that the world is **yours**, that self-clutching that holds you back is released, and your whole nature pours out, pours out in ever increasing sweetness and beauty.

3. The Way of the Will

There are some who attain their purpose by sheer force of will. They know what they want and direct their will resolutely, tirelessly, and with all their strength, towards their objective, however far off and out of reach it may seem. Reinforced by an unshakeable faith that they **must** somehow, some time, attain their purpose, their will becomes an irresistible force that cannot be withstood or deflected and goes remorselessly on to final triumph.

Yours must be such a will, such one-pointed, inflexible, unwavering purpose. Nor is it enough to direct it at your object once and trust to that as sufficient. Every time the urge manifests itself in your consciousness you must let the whole weight of your being go with it. Notice that in life almost all movement is by a succession of small impulses. The only things that go to their goal as a result of a single great impulse carry death with them—the arrow, the whistling bullet, the shrieking shell.

You find that you are consumed by the urge, say, to know the truth with regard to some important problem of life. Every time the urge manifests itself in your consciousness let the whole weight of your entire being be thrown into the thrust towards your goal. The tendency will be, as soon as—thinking ahead—you find yourself in the role of an

original thinker on your subject, to draw back from the responsibility it involves. But you must be quick to realize that the tendency is but karma—illusion and fear of the mass-being—and must be corrected. There must be no trace of doubt in your mind of your destiny as a seer and one who is unassailably certain of what he proclaims.

What a difference the knowledge of the great fact of reincarnation makes to one! In that knowledge you can be **absolutely** sure of attaining your goal some time, and in this assurance you can throw all your being into your urge towards it.

4. The Way of Action

But, if one really means to bring success into one's grasp, one must do more than mere willing. Volition must be converted into doing. One must act.

Needless to say, you will do things all wrong at first and will flounder along clumsily and ridiculously. But every failure will make you so much surer of success because it will have taught you one way how **not** to achieve your purpose, one pitfall to avoid. All learning **must be** experimental, because, no matter how well the theory of the thing may have been unfolded to you or formulated by yourself, it is only through experience that it is fully understood.

Moreover, when one is trying to achieve anything, it is only by actually attempting to do it and only partly succeeding that one learns where to direct one's energies. You want to be a musician, say. You may be inclined to find an excuse for inaction by saying that you are past the age when learning would come easy, and content yourself with just willing that you'll acquire the art in your **next** life. But by actually attempting to do it now—even if you do not succeed—you'll be able to point your will with greater precision. If your ambition is to be a violinist, by actually doing something to acquire the art you will learn to point your aim, not merely at ability to play the violin conceived of in a general sort of way, but at such things as the cultivation of tonal quality and the acquirement of technique, in which, your excursions into the art have taught you, the secret of its mastery really lies.

One Learns Best in Mature Years

In this connection let me make a statement that will appear as a most daring heresy: It is in maturity and not in childhood or adolescence that one really learns. All that one can do in immaturity is reawaken those faculties that one had developed in earlier lives. Childhood is revision time. But, try as hard as you like, you can **never** teach a child to do anything he had never learnt in

past incarnations. In maturity however, one **can** learn new things. I feel justified in going even further and saying that our ability to learn goes on developing at the same rate as one's other mental powers develop, and decays side by side with them.

Here again, what a difference a knowledge of reincarnation makes! As long as one is obsessed by the fallacy that with death one quits this life forever, to spend the rest of one's existence in conditions very different, one way or another, from those obtaining in this world, the usefulness of cultivating a faculty after having turned fifty or even forty seems to be very shadowy and insubstantial, feeling, as one does, that one is not likely to use that faculty for a sufficiently long time to justify the labour of its cultivation. But when you know that not the least iota of any faculty will be lost, one is heartened to continue in one's efforts to acquire it. In maturity, far better than in youth, one can gauge the problems with which one is faced in what one is trying to do, and in seeing one's problems clearly and being able to decide where to direct one's will and one's efforts half the battle is won.

Go forward, then, in your ambition to have this or that ability, no matter how ambitious the ambition may appear to be. Whatever ability you acquire here, however little or however great, will be carried by you into your next incarnation.

What One Life Bequeathes to the Next

No, that's not quite true. You won't take the ability with you, but something quite as useful and more easily portable because it can be packed into your karma, which is all that you are allowed to carry with you over the frontier from one life to another—the power to ability, potentiality. A common metaphor likens knowledge to a lamp. But, besides the obvious point of resemblance, the two have also this in common that they need constant tending to keep them from dying down. And when you embark on the voyage that takes you "from out this bourne of time and place," you will find that it is strictly against rules to carry any lighted lamps with you. But there's no objection to your taking a box of matches—or, say, just one match. And you'll find that much the better: it needs no tending, and yet it conserves your flame—in potentiality.

It is true that we take only our karma from one life to another, but it is most amazing what can be packed into karma. It is equally true to say that all that a father gives his offspring physically is karma, a microscopic spermatozoon which, after it has conjugated with the ovum to become the zygote, has the tendency to repeat the process of evolution which culminated in the physical being of its parent. But

it is an eternal wonder how much is packed into that microscopic organism—in potentiality. Consider all we know to be hereditary, including physical attributes such as build, facial contours and pigmentation of the skin and hair, and one is staggered at the thought how all that fire can be caught, held and conserved in that infinitesimal match of a spermatozoon.

The Permanent Atom

Dr. Besant has said that an atom, which she has called the Permanent Atom, of one's present physical body is passed on (in a manner that has yet to be determined) to one's next physical body. If this is true, as seems very likely, it is probable that this conveys one's karma from one incarnation to another in the same way as the spermatozoon conveys hereditary karma from father to son. How wonderful is it, then, that in the earth of imperious Caesar a single atom has in it all the power, when the fire of the imperious spirit again touches it, of reproducing the man that will again keep the world in awe or at least have it in his power to do so.

Now there is not a thing that you do, not a word nor a thought, but leaves its trace on your karma. It would be interesting to know in what way our karma is affected by those activities whose object is

to gain possession of things which we must leave behind when we die. An entire chapter could be written on this subject. But we shall limit ourselves to just a few remarks on some outstanding facts in this connection.

Although it is true that we do not take our wealth with us from one life to another, the possession of wealth has a marked effect on one's character, that is, on one's karma, and this is taken over to the next life in the form of a potentiality. I do not believe that the karma with which one begins one life is identical with that with which one ended the last, any more than the karma with which a pup commences life is identical with that of its parent at the time. Acquired characteristics of the parent are not transmitted, but their potentiality is. The pup of a dog that has been taught to retrieve is not born with that ability, but it can be trained to it a shade more easily. The shade of difference is not appreciable as between a parent and its offspring, but the cumulative effect in a strain in which generation after generation has been trained to do the same thing is such as to produce an aptitude to acquire that characteristic which is very considerable as compared with that of the original founder of the strain or of collateral descendants along a line not so trained. The characteristic is not inherited, but the potentiality is.

Transmission of Acquired Characteristics in Potentialized Form

Now the relation between the personality of one incarnation and that of another is the same as between parent and offspring; and the same personality in a succession of incarnations corresponds to a succession of generations of the same strain.

The acquisition of a faculty in one incarnation forms the basis, not only of the ability to develop it more easily in the next, but also of the **tendency** to do so. Put two children, of whom one had in a previous life acquired some ability in music and the other had never done so, in the same set of conditions in which opportunities of acquiring musical ability present themselves equally to both—say, as children of the same father who is a musician—and the former, it will be found, will more readily, besides more easily, make use of his opportunities.

The Faith that Comes of Success

Now we have to enquire what effects the possession of wealth has on one's character. It would probably increase the lust for wealth and the attachment to it. But at the same time it gives one greater faith in oneself and in one's ability to acquire what wealth one needs. All these enter into one's karma and are carried from one incarnation to another.

The two first are not very desirable traits. But let them stand for the present, until the time is ripe to weed them out. The faith, however, is useful. In the first place it helps one to take incarnation in a family of means, and this—at one stage of one's evolution—is all to the good. I firmly believe that before one incarnates there is a certain amount of deliberate choice on one's part of the body into which one will take birth and that the child is as much a party to its gestation as its parents. Far the larger part of those who incarnate into poor and humble families do so chiefly because they do not "dare" to be born rich or even comfortably off.

This faith has very strange effects upon those that it enters into. A certain amount of it gives one heart to do what one had hitherto shrunk from. But a little more of it takes away the edge of the appetite to do it.

To take a concrete example: A certain amount of faith in himself and in his ability to hold his own will give a youngster at school courage to take on an opponent whom he might not have been expected to. A greater confidence in himself later on, a fuller assurance of that ability—and the effect will probably be that he will find himself in a position to condone and overlook any action on the other's part that would otherwise have been made a *casus belli*.

In the same way, a certain amount of confidence in one's ability to get possession of what one has a will to puts ambition into one. But this is often a grudging sort of ambition that clings tenaciously to what it succeeds in taking. But there is a self-confidence which makes it possible for one to give freely. And this is not acquired by mere theorizing. I believe that it is only by actual and continued experience of possessions that that assurance of sufficiency is worked into one's being which makes it possible and even easy to part with what one has, and finally to divest oneself of all one's wealth with ease and equanimity. And this Assurance, it will be found, is a far sounder basis of true and lasting happiness than riches, however abundant.

Transmission of Physical Characteristics

Much of what has been said in connection with riches would apply to those possessions or acquisitions—such as strength, agility, beauty—which are inseparable from the physical body and which accordingly we must leave behind with that body when we quit it at the end of this life. However, if the Permanent Atom performs the same function between the physical body in one life and that in the next as the spermatozoon does between father and son, the potentiality of such physical attributes as the three mentioned above would probably be

conveyed from one body to another, and one's body in one life would tend to have a resemblance to that in the preceding one, even if there is a change of sex or of race. There appears to be very good reason to believe that the labour that is put into the development of a strong or agile body is not lost when that body is lowered to its final resting place. Nor are the long hours and infinite pains that a woman gives to the cultivation and maintenance of the beauty of her face and form to be regarded as having been wasted when the body of which they formed part—I exclude fake—has turned to lifeless clay. Strength, agility, beauty, are all conserved in potentialized form in the Permanent Atom.

Nor is it ever too late in life to think of maintaining or even cultivating them. One is too prone to think after a certain age that the best years of one's life lie behind one and such things can be of very little use and that it is a waste of time and labour to keep oneself fit and presentable. The care which a man gives to his appearance even when he is about to be led to his execution has fruits which do no altogether perish with the body.

CHAPTER XVI

PLEASURE AND PAIN

ALL the pleasure and pain that we experience are the result of our karma.

But we must distinguish carefully between two very different things: (1) Pleasure or Pain, as the case may be, and (2) the occasion thereof. Now the occasions of Pain and Pleasure, the things that happen to us and occasion suffering and happiness, are very largely independent of our actions. That they are in most cases influenced to some extent by what we have done—our "doing," our karma—is undeniable, but there is a multiplicity of other factors which contribute to the shaping of them, factors which are independent of, and unaffected by, what we do.

But what **is** governed **entirely** by one's own karma is the amount of Pain and Pleasure that we experience as a result of these things happening to us. Pleasure-Pain does not inhere in those things from which they appear to emanate but is entirely made by oneself or by one's karma, one's reactions to

them. In order to understand this we must put Karma under the microscope, so to speak, and dissect it.

The Four Elements of "Doing"

In all that we do, however subconscious it may appear to be, there are four factors always present, Cognition, Emotion, Volition, and Activity. It is a commonplace of Psychology that, although these factors can be distinguished one from another, they cannot be separated. If one attempts to isolate any of them, it is found to contain the others. Cognition, for example, involves Interest, which is Emotional in nature; Attention, which is Volitional; and Activity—of the brain and the perceptive faculties.

Cognition

Cognition means the ideation in the conscious and subconscious mind of a certain set of conditions as being present. Needless to say, this is seldom, owing to Memory and Imagination, a faithful image of actual facts. There is always a certain amount of distortion, Illusion. Often it is so distorted as to bear no recognizable resemblance to the original. The nature and extent of this distortion is the result **entirely** of one's karma. Now it is what appears in the mind, and not the actual facts, with which we

are concerned, as Emotion, and in most cases Volition and Action, follow upon Cognition before Illusion can be unmasked or even its existence suspected.

Emotion

'Emotion follows immediately upon Cognition. The word Emotion (literally, " motion from ") suggests a natural reaction to any given stimulus, or, correctly speaking, **away from** it. This reaction is, of course, karmic, following, unless corrected, in the groove karma has made by long use, or in other words, following the cycle established by karma. It follows so automatically upon the stimulus that, often, one is made aware of the stimulus only by one's emotional reaction thereto; and in all cases one finds the emotion within one as if it were something that had entered from somewhere without and of its own accord, and we are made aware of it by a recognizable sensation. We say, " It makes me angry to think . . .," or " I feel sorry to hear . . .," or, " It gives me pride to know . . .," Anger, Pity, Pride being regarded as something for which we are not entirely responsible and which had somehow been put there by the stimulus.

No one will deny that, as part of every emotion, there is a physical change of some kind. If we could determine with certainty and exactitude what

the nature of this change is—apart from the outward expression of our emotions—we should have a valuable clue to the rest of what makes up Emotion.

So much appears certain in any case with regard to it, that it consists of a physical rearrangement—or derangement—which puts the body out of equilibrium or in a state of tension. Whether, as seems likely, this rearrangement is one which takes place in each cell of the body, or whether it affects only certain units, we have yet to discover.

We have already seen in Chapter VII that in unicellular creatures Desire appears to be accompanied by a rearrangement of the chromosomes (which make up the nucleus) which are then held in a state of tension so as to accommodate the desired conditions, and we may be fairly certain that in human Emotion something cognate takes place. Desire is an integral part of every emotion and consists of the creation of a void or vacuum ; or inclination away from conditions present in the direction of the desired set of conditions. Notice the word "inclination" (for Desire)—leaning, being unbalanced. Being unbalanced (by which I mean maintaining a position which is out of equilibrium) is being in a state of tension and involves strain.

What takes place in the higher vehicles is probably a reflection of what takes place in the physical—unbalance, tension, strain.

Now it is easy to see that tension or strain means pain. It is in fact this strain that makes itself felt and focuses attention on the emotion that has arisen within one.

This position out of equilibrium (or state of tension) may be momentary, or it may be sustained. The longer it is sustained, the more does the pain make itself felt; but it is oneself that sustains it, as it is oneself that created the tension; and the cause is the same in each case: Fear, leaning away from conditions, present or anticipated, which are regarded as undesirable.

For example, something happens that arouses anger and the urge to do something to suppress the offender. If one examined oneself, one would find that one had undergone a change and had, as it were, created a void (Desire) which can be filled (or "fulfilled") only by the suppression aforesaid. But fear of some kind prevents one, maybe, from doing what is necessary to fill that void; one sustains the tension and the sense of irritation.

On the other hand, one may see one's way clear to the desired set of conditions. In which case one proceeds to the next step—Volition.

Emotion and Volition Differentiated

Some people find it difficult to distinguish between Emotion and Volition. Perhaps the following simile may be of some use. In taking a step in walking one distinguishes two different actions. The first consists in leaning away from equilibrium on one foot; the second, putting the other foot down in a suitable position and urging oneself forward towards equilibrium on that foot. Now emotion consists, as we have seen, in leaning away from a set of conditions which Cognition presents to one as present or contingent. Volition goes further: it consists in putting one's foot down, as it were, in a desired set of conditions and essaying to find balance there. Volition involves Determination, a fiat sent out by the ego that such and such a thing shall be. The difference between Emotion and Volition is well seen in the following example.

One wakes on a Sunday morning to find the earth revelling in glorious sunshine and an exhilarating atmosphere. It is one's usual habit to have a *grasse matinée* on Sunday, but the sunshine and the tonic morning air fill one with a zest to be up and out. But it may be some time, half-an-hour perhaps, before that necessary something happens that brings the morning outing out of the realm of wishes into that of definite purpose. It is this something that constitutes Volition.

Volition and Activity Differentiated

Nor must we confuse Volition with Activity. It is true that in this case Volition is followed so soon by the action of jumping out of bed that the two appear inseparable. But Volition may be separated by long periods of time from its Activity. In fact, it is constantly at work decreeing activity that is to take place the following day, the following year, many years afterwards, even—in the case of people who are aware of the truth of reincarnation—in succeeding lives. And it comes as a surprise to one how faithfully Activity follows Volition: as when one wakes in the morning at exactly the hour one had made up one's mind the previous night that one would.

Or take this example: A lad entering college sees before him three years of solid work, for which he musters up his powers. Everything goes swimmingly for those three years. He is then required to do another two years of work; but in doing it he is puzzled to find that he has not the same zest for work as before: the Volition preceding the first three years' work was far greater than that which preceded the last two years.

Volition Is the Release of Power

The difference between Volition and Activity may be likened to that between the letting of steam

into the cylinders of a locomotive and the actual movement of the pistons, wheels, etc.

Now, if Volition involves the transmission of energy, two questions arise: Where is the energy stored or created? In what medium is it transmitted?

The questions are, of course, very big ones, but one may hazard an answer. It is likely that the medium is the same as that in which light and the radio programmes come to us. Which suggests the thought that telepathy may yet prove to be an elder brother of wireless, taking "telepathy" in its literal sense of feeling-transference, and not thought-transference.

But, whatever the vehicle of Volition-energy may be, there is somewhat more certainty about its source, the machine that creates or transforms for use the energy which is used by the Will. That it is the brain that does this useful work is made fairly certain by the fact that the exercise of the will is often accompanied by a sense of strain on the brain. How it works will only be clear when we know more about the exact functions of the brain matter. How great is the power of the Will is well seen in cases, such as that of Phidippides, where, in order to make Activity carry out its decrees, Volition has stretched out one's physical powers well beyond their natural limits.

When thinking of the force of Will one must have in mind, not a force acting continuously, like that of Gravity or of a wound-up watch-spring, but acting rather in a succession of impulses, as in rowing a boat, the frequency being of course higher.

Pain

Pain is a sense of thwarted effort, of the force of Will being applied without getting satisfactorily nearer its object or, more accurately, further from the conditions that one is seeking to escape from. Pain and Fear are almost synonymous terms. There is a striking phenomenon in connection with Pain that deserves careful attention. A circumstance that is continuous and unvarying, such as being out of employment, will be found to give far more intense pain—or pleasure—at one moment than at another. Which proves that Pain does not inhere in the occasion of it, but in one's volitional impulses away from it; and, since these impulses vary very considerably in strength, so does the intensity of the pain one experiences.

There is another very remarkable characteristic of Pain: A circumstance that gives one person pain may give another pleasure, although both of them stand in the same relation to that circumstance. The jazz number that someone across the street is thumping out on his piano gives one of us pleasure,

but causes another intense irritation. The volition of one moves with the performance; that of the other, against it.

It may sound strange to hear of Volition being exercised with respect to the actions of other people, especially, as here, of a person whose identity one cannot guess and has probably no intention of trying to discover. But actually it **is** so exercised, and often with surprising results. Not only by people who have trained themselves in some sort of way for it, but by everyone, more or less, and generally unconsciously. One visualizes a set of conditions regarding another and one's will presses towards that.

In our example, the first person's will moves in the direction of a continuance of the performance: the second, who is himself a musician—jazz variety—finds his volition decreeing that the performer across the way get a more even tempo, get a better balance in the execution of the two hands, and one or two other things of that kind. His will presses that way—but without effect; presses harder; and still harder, until it almost maddens him to hear the piece go on in the same indifferent tempo, with a bass that sounds to him like a coarse and brutalized man out to "quail, crush, conclude and quell" the treble.

The irritation that one experiences from things that are not one's concern has its explanation in the

Infectiousness of Karma. A man, for example, has neighbours who go in for breeding dogs, and declares that "it makes his blood boil" to see all the fuss and attention that he sees given to the animals. But why should it irk him? He is not called upon to do anything for them or even to look on at others doing for them what is necessary. The truth is: to see another doing anything or attempting to do anything stirs a sort of sympathetic response in oneself. One's desire and volition range themselves alongside the other's. Our man visualizes himself doing what the other is doing and he behaves exactly as he would if he actually had to do it himself.

Most "mental pain" consists of frustrated Volition. "Unfulfilled Desire," says the poet. But where Desire has not ripened into Volition, unfulfilled Desire by itself occasions a very much milder ache-sensation. When Volition, however, is active, frustration becomes intensely galling to one.

Physical pain, like mental, is caused, not by the extraneous stimulus, but one's reaction to it. It will perhaps be difficult to prove this of all physical pain that we experience; but Indian ascetics have demonstrated by controlling their reactions to such things as contact with burning coals that it is possible to avoid the ordinarily resultant pain. They have also been known to pierce themselves with needles and,

when these were withdrawn, not only has no blood been seen to flow, but no trace of an incision has been visible. Furthermore, they have made incisions in their skin and, at will, have stopped the blood flowing from the wound and started it flowing again.

These and similar phenomena provide a very wide and rich field for investigation. Unfortunately, the necessary material is somewhat elusive; but I feel sure that it will in course of time be demonstrable that Pain of any kind whatsoever is created, not by the extraneous stimulus, but by the reaction thereto, and can be eliminated by the ability to control that reaction.

Pleasure

But what of Pleasure? What is its essential nature?

Take careful note of the following facts about Pleasure:

First, Pleasure is as a rule greater—sometimes incomparably greater—in anticipation than in realization. "All things that are are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd."

Secondly, one cannot, unchanging, derive pleasure from an unchanging condition of things. Pleasure somehow connotes change or movement.

Thirdly—and this in a way includes the other two—pleasure is remarkably evanescent in its substance.

Psychologists have said, in attempting to determine the nature of Pleasure and Plain, that "the more easily an active tendency passes to its end-state, the more pleasant it is; the more an active tendency is obstructed, the more unpleasant it is." It would be more correct to say: The more easily an active tendency passes **away from its beginning-state**—the "initiate fear"—the more pleasant it is. The man who is busy amassing riches is not seeking wealth so much as he is trying to escape from the spectre of pennilessness which a too active imagination conjures up at his heels. Here we have the explanation of the evanescent quality of Pleasure. Since Pleasure is movement away from a certain state of things, it ceases as soon as one finds that one is clear of that state.

The strain of the Will away from it determines the intensity (notice the word "intensity," tension, strain,) of the Pleasure or Pain that we experience. Now this strain, and the Fear which occasions it, and the Illusion that gives rise to Fear, are all dependent on Karma. Which is itself entirely the outcome of our past. So it is perfectly true to say that the pleasure and pain we experience are the result of our past "doing" or karma. But that is a very different thing from saying that what other people do to us or what happens to us as the result of a pure accident is the effect

"by the operation of natural laws" of our past actions.

Karma, Good and Bad, and Pleasure-Pain

When we think of Pain and Pleasure as resulting from Karma, we are apt to regard the one as resulting from Bad Karma and the other from Good. The truth is both of them can be the cause of either pain or pleasure.

But if, as we shall see later, Dharma consists in freeing oneself from Karma, "burning away Karma," "destroying Karma," and so forth, it would appear that **all** Karma must be regarded as undesirable and, so, bad.

These expressions are unfortunately very misleading. Karma is represented as a substance which it should be one's purpose to annihilate in a way that makes it cease entirely to be. Actually Karma never ceases to be; the karmic reaction always occurs, but one learns to recover from it in ever shortening periods, until recovery becomes instantaneous, following immediately upon the reaction, as the reaction follows immediately upon the stimulus.

But, whereas Bad Karma makes Dharma more difficult, Good Karma makes it easier. The reason is that the fear that is left within one's being after doing a bit of bad karma is greater than that which was there before it was done and which originated

it. Now, since our goal is the annihilation of the fear which originates it, we are obviously getting further from that goal when we add to the fears already there. At the same time we are laying the foundation of future Pain for ourselves, since, as has already been said, Pain and Fear are almost synonymous terms.

"*Thou mayest well ask me concerning the origin of Pain, O Mettagu,*"—*so said Bhagavat,*—"*I will explain that to thee in the way I myself know it: originating in the upadhis pains arise whatsoever they are, of many kinds in the world.*

"*He who being ignorant creates upadhi, that fool later undergoes pain; therefore let not the wise man create upadhi, considering that this is the birth and origin of pain.*"

Sutta Nipata (*Mettagumanavapuchchha*).

Now "*upadhi*" means literally "addition." Addition of what? Let us see.

Ambition puts into Macbeth's head the notion of his occupying the throne of Scotland. The weird sisters turn thought into desire, and an unspeakable wife turns desire into volition, and hastens volition into action, the murder which is to clear the way to the object of his ambition. But, before he commits the foul deed, he hesitates for a short space. Let us consider the issue that faces him.

He finds himself urged on by the fear that is at the back of all ambition or lust for power. But he finds himself held back by the fear of his fellow nobles and fellow men generally, whose hostility he must of necessity awaken. Even if he could despatch Duncan in such a way that people would not have the slight suspicion of his part in the "taking-off," there would still be his conscience to reckon with. It is in loading his conscience with this heinous offence committed in cold blood that Macbeth is planting the seed of future torment and affliction for himself. This, if he could see it, is the stark issue that faces him.

Conscience

What exactly is Conscience? Notice the words we use as synonyms, more or less, for conscience: remorse ("biting back"), repentance ("paining back"), regret, compunction. In all of them there is the idea of a force that had been created acting back on its source. Have we here an instance of the operation of Newton's Third Law? Because every time Volition acts, force is exerted and applied to something; and there is no doubt about it that when one does anything that is prejudicial to the interests of another and opposed to his will, there is a sense of an opposite force created which takes the form of Fear and which is exactly

equal to the Volition-force that one exerts against it. It is this Fear that is the seed of future trouble.

It is hard to believe of the patient and long-suffering person, insignificant and of no account, whom one habitually wrongs, that in so doing one is all the time planting in oneself fear of the "poor mutt." But several things may happen to bring the fact home to one, all of which have this in common that they prevent one from behaving in one's accustomed way towards him. It is then that this fear makes itself felt.

Firstly, the mere removal of the other person by death or otherwise from one's environment makes the subconscious fear assert itself, bringing it often into full consciousness. The grief that people sometimes evince **and suffer quite genuinely** at the loss by death of someone whom they have for years wronged comes to one as a startling revelation.

Again, the fear will make itself felt when one is afflicted, as by sickness or misfortune, or when one has been badly worsted, or in any way humbled ("Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pound,") or reduced to the condition of being unable to act in the accustomed way to one's former victim or victims. Affliction is always remarkably fruitful of good resolutions.

The fear will make itself particularly felt when one is in peril of one's life or in dire straits.

A great fear seizing one has the power of awakening the lesser fears that infest the soul and so of bringing to the surface of one's consciousness wrongs that one had done or, as the saying puts it with some exaggeration, " making all one's past rise up before one."

It is of no use trying to smother or burke the fear. Until one can remove it by making atonement or by reconciliation, the fear will remain with one as an addition to that mass of fear which is the root of karma and the source of all the pain we suffer.

This is the "*upadhi*" spoken of by the Lord Buddha. "*Upadhi*" is that which **adds** to the fear in the subconscious, the additional shade of hostility or fearsomeness in the countenance of the mass-being, the " they " that we speak of so often and so continuously have in our minds, to whom we feel ourselves to be responsible and of whom we stand in awe.

Confession

Our Lord counsels us to make atonement at the earliest opportunity, to make oneself " at one " with him whom one has offended against.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. *Matthew*, V, 25.

Of course, this means admission of one's fault to those concerned and particularly to the one who has suffered most by it. Confession in the seclusion of a confessional to a priest who is sworn to secrecy is no true confession. The main object of confession is the removal of the fear that one has created for oneself by the offence, by avowing it and letting the other party do his worst if he has a mind to wreak vengeance. In this way one clears one's conscience of the fear that would otherwise remain there. "Conscience does make cowards of us all," because conscience has fear at its root.

My strange and self-abuse
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use.

But, alas! Macbeth is pitifully mistaken in thinking that hard use will dispose of this "initiate fear." Lady Macbeth made the same mistake.

Stop up the access and passage to remorse
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose.

She seemed to have a notion that remorse was something outside herself and that violence was all that was necessary to keep it out. She was to learn that she had merely been keeping it down **within** herself, to gnaw the entrails of her being out later on.

There is no way of smothering or killing the fear. Nor can one run away from it, because it is within

one. The more reprehensible the deed, the greater is the fear of society generally and of one's victims in particular. Macbeth, it is certain, would carry with him into his next life on earth a sense of being hated by mankind, or what "mankind" means to him. Needless to say, this is going to have a very serious effect on the course of his life and its pain-content to him. Speculations as to the nature and events of that life would provide rich material for a novelist to work on.

Penitence and Forgiveness

Forgiveness of another is largely assisted by his penitence. If he has seen his fault and his error, it makes it so much the easier for you to see it also. In fact, to be unable to forgive indicates the presence of *Rajas* in your nature. Hence our Lord's injunction to Peter:

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. *Matthew*, XVIII, 21, 22.

If one does not forgive, it means that one entertains a fear of the other in one's heart, a fear that will remain there to be a source of trouble later on.

It is for this reason, as has already been noticed, that Confession is salutary. Confession of one's

misdoings is enjoined not only in Christianity, but also in Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism. In the *Zend Avesta* (*Vendidad*, III, 41,) for instance, it is written.

The law of Mazda indeed, O Spitama Zarathustra, takes away from him who confesses it the bonds of sin.

The *Jain Sutras* do not go so far as to promise absolution from sin or liberation from its bonds by Confession, but more guardedly declare that it removes the "thorns," and that it **opens the way** to liberation.

Atonement

Atonement goes a step further than Confession. In committing the offence, you have separated yourself from the other by raising the barrier of fear between you. Confession and a show of penitence may not remove the fear, as the other may still entertain a fear that, in spite of your present penitence, you may be liable to commit the offence again ; in such a mood he may be likely to be vengeful. In Atonement one shows no fear of what he may do, allowing him to do his worst. This allays his fears and allows of reconciliation, at-one-ment.

It is possible to atone for the sins of others, not by vicarious punishment, but in a manner that I shall attempt to indicate. Let us suppose that there

are two important families in a town between whom there is a long-standing vendetta. A Montague, meeting a Capulet, expects nasty words and perhaps blows, and is generally prepared to give as good as he gets. There may come along a Montague who sees the madness of it all and has no disposition for his part to bear ill-will against a Capulet nor do him an injury. But he knows, whatever his disposition, that he will be treated by the Capulets no differently from other Montagues. He may, to make atonement between the two factions, allow them to do so without retaliating in the accustomed way and so open the way to a general reconciliation.

There is something of this nature hinted at in the following passage taken from a letter written by the Master K. H. to Mr. Leadbeater.

There is also the collective karma of the caste you belong to to be considered. It is undeniable that the cause you have at heart is now suffering owing to the dark intrigues, the base conspiracy of the Christian clergy and missionaries against the Society. They will stop before nothing to ruin the reputation of the Founders. Are you willing to atone for their sins?

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, (First Series), p. 33.

" Dark intrigues ! base conspiracy ! " Has he the strength of character to be able to withstand being

drawn into the intrigues of his brothers of the cloth? Furthermore, is he prepared to put out a hand to their enemy, whatever it may cost him?

It is against the spirit of Atonement to dissociate oneself from one's erring fellows; to say, "Yes, I'm of the same caste, but I have nothing to do with this sort of thing." Rather should one say, "I'm one of them, but I see the fault we have done; you can vent your wrath on me if that will reconcile us."

There is Atonement of a somewhat different kind: not as between two hostile factions, but where there is unrighteousness of any kind fairly general among the members of the class or race to which one belongs; anyone who keeps to the strait and narrow path finds that he suffers thereby. If in the particular profession or department to which one belongs there is intriguing and scrambling for place and power, to refrain from joining in the scramble results in one's being left out in the cold. But one takes the consequences in the hope of making thereby some contribution to the re-establishment of sanity and straightforward dealing.

If the general condition of things is very bad, it often requires a very great and courageous soul to undertake the act of Atonement for the common sinfulness.

Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then

I Myself come forth ; for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age. *Bhagavad Gita*, IV, 7, 8.

Christ too tells us that He came " to give his life a ransom for many."

Obstacles

Closely connected with this subject of forgiveness and atonement is that of being " offended," the word being used in a somewhat milder sense than it has in the passage quoted on page 212. Let us take two passages in which it is thus used.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another ? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And ***blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*** *Matthew*, XI, 2-6.

And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works ? Is not this the

carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Jesus, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? ***And they were offended in him.*** *Matthew*, XIII, 54-7.

The word "offended" does not mean "displeased" or "annoyed." We have seen that the Greek word of which it is a translation means "obstructed," "hindered in one's movement." The offences that our Lord refers to are such as one constantly meets—or, correctly speaking, makes for oneself. A person's inferior social status, his belonging to what one regards as an inferior race, his unprepossessing appearance, his peculiarities of speech, a host of other things, may act as obstacles and cause one to close one's heart to another and to his good influence.

John the Baptist himself was almost "offended" and sent messengers to our Lord for an assurance that He was the expected Messiah. He had himself foretold His coming, but quite possibly formed in his mind a concept of something more obviously grand than our Lord showed Himself to be. Thanks to all the pictures in which He is shown, we are apt to think of Him as having been a very conspicuous figure in the crowd in which He moved. The truth almost certainly is that, except to those who had the genius to recognize His transcendent genius, He

was not conspicuously different from any other Galilean of His social rank.

And that rank was humble enough. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" It was our Lord's humble social status that caused the people of His home town to be "offended" in Him in spite of His wisdom and His wonderful works.

But blessed is he who is **not** offended. It should be clearly understood that this is a statement of fact and not a promise of reward. Blessed **is.** One who can rise superior to such barriers as offend the ordinary **is** "blessed," blessed by the God within him and thereby rendered immune from the mass karma of his class and race. Of course, there is this blessing also to be considered that one who does not allow another's poverty, say, or inferior social status or any other such thing to stand between them shows thereby that when it shall be his lot to find himself in the position of the other, it will not grieve him in the least. But those who are subject to these offences are just the ones who suffer the keenest mortification "when the wheel is come full circle."

CHAPTER XVII

LIFE'S DILEMMA

ALL Karma is self-expression or self-realization. These are somewhat amorphous terms, and it would be well to try and give them some degree of definiteness. "Self-expression" seems to me unsatisfactory and I use it only in deference to popular usage: it seems to suggest a self pressing outwards through something or other that envelops and constricts it, and it's doubtful if this view accords with facts, either literally or by way of metaphor.

And what does "self-realization" mean? Is there in it any suggestion that by Karma one is attempting to **realize** or discover the self? Or does it imply that there is in general a sense of the reality of the self not being established and that Karma is an effort to establish that reality? That is probably nearer the truth.

Karma is always an urge from a condition of things which Cognition presents to the consciousness as containing a threat to one's stability, towards a condition in which one sees that stability

as likely to be secured. As long, then, as one does not attain that desired condition or get clear of the conditions which Cognition presents, one must perforce have a sense of one's not being established, of being insecure, unsettled. It would thus appear that anything that we might do to obstruct or restrain this urge towards stability is wrong.

By fulfilling Desire one effects stability; one has the satisfaction of feeling, "I am."

Karma's Mirage

But not for long. It is part of the illusion of Karma that its goal, like a mirage, recedes ever further from us the further we go towards it. The youth that has just entered on his University career looks forward to the taking of his degree as the *summum bonum* of life. The months flit by and the years gather behind him, until in due course the proud day arrives when he can hitch those two letters of power and might to his name—B.A. His cup of happiness is full and life sweetly rounded off and complete for him. He lives in a golden city.

But soon enough his eye lights on another golden city in the distance—M.A.—and when he looks around him he finds that the gold of that in which he now is is very dull indeed. He looks closer at it and finds that it's not gold, but

pinchbeck. The real golden city lies gleaming ahead of him. He musters resolution and sets out for it.

And so the tale goes on. But each chapter is a repetition of the first, just a shadow show going round and round. Where does it end? One may well ask that question, because there appears to be **no** end to the story. Moreover, the further it goes on, the more remote seems any possibility of it **ever** coming to an end. The more Karma is indulged, the greater is the momentum it acquires and the harder does it become to stay it; and also, the greater is the power that one confers on it to occasion pain to oneself.

It would seem, then, that the right thing to do is to put Karma down with a firm hand.

Life's Dilemma

Now that is life's dilemma. We can never know contentment until Karma is fully satisfied; happiness, then, is to be found only in the full satisfaction of Karma. But it is equally true that one can never know happiness until one has freed oneself from the bonds of Karma. One is bewildered by what appears to be a flat contradiction by one incontrovertible truth of another that is equally incontrovertible, one's bewilderment being the same as that of Arjuna when he exclaims,

Renunciation of Karma thou praisest, O Krishna, and also yoga by Karma. Of the two which is the better? That tell me conclusively.

Bhagavad Gita, V, 1.

And Shri Krishna, you'll remember, tells him that they are one and the same thing:

Children, not sages, speak of the sankhya and the yoga as different. . . . He seeth who seeth that the sankhya and the yoga are one. V. 4, 5.

In all ages and wherever man has turned his attention to his own nature and to the question whether that nature should be given expression to or curbed there have always been two schools of thought: one taking the former view, and the other the latter. The one maintains that we shall never have perfect peace of mind until our nature finds full self-expression; the other holds that we shall not have seen the last of trouble until we have brought our nature completely under control. Now, although these two principles seem diametrically opposed to each other, they are found, when each reaches its perfection, to coincide and be actually complementary to each other. Perfect self-expression and perfect self-control—which is self-renunciation—are found to be each possible only when each goes hand in hand with the other.

In trying to determine what one's purpose in life, one's objective, is to be, we must get it out of our

minds that there is a Being outside ourselves who has put us into this world and who has in mind a certain objective for us which we must discover and attain. It is far more likely that we come into this life of our own volition. And we must enquire why.

Now there is little doubt about it that what brings us into incarnation is the desire to take in, to gather to ourselves, to absorb. If that, then, is our purpose, when is it ever complete? Where does happiness and contentment lie?

Let me recount an experience—trifling enough: you may wonder why I recount it—which occurred to me at a time when I was tortured by this question.

An Incident

Anyone who knows his India knows what "halwa" is. On one occasion a man was at work preparing this delectable confection, the while I was immersed in my favourite occupation of sitting and looking on. He went on stirring the stuff in the ghee in which it was cooking and which, as the morning wore on, it was gradually soaking up. In course of time it had absorbed all the ghee and left the dixie dry, and I announced to the man with the ladle that his halwa was ready.

"That's where you make a mistake," he corrected me. "It's not when it has taken it all in, but when it has given it out again, that it's complete."

It seemed to me that a great light had suddenly flooded creation to its furthest boundlessness, revealing in all their wonderful detail what had hitherto been dark shapes barely discernible in a darkness that was even more profound. "It's not when it has taken it all in but when it has given it out again that it's complete." Was this an omniscient seer, stepped down from heaven, uttering golden wisdom and giving in a few words the key to the whole problem of life?

—and Its Lesson

Because the same principle applies to all life, from its most commonplace factors to the most sublime. We breathe in and breathe out again: which of the two actions is right and which wrong? In walking, is it wrong to take your foot up because you have to put it down again the next moment? These questions appear nonsensical, but when we ask whether it is right to express one's nature or to renounce it, the question is in exactly the same category.

All movement, all progress, all life, is but an alternation of losing one's equilibrium and recovering it, or say, of breathing in and breathing out. But in certain things the period of oscillation extends over such measureless aeons that we can see only a small part of the movement in one direction, and

we cannot help but regard it as going on forever in a straight line in that direction. The growth and dissolution of a solar system is but a swinging forth and back of Brahma into matter and out of it again; an ensouling of matter, resulting in its building up; and a withdrawal from it, resulting in its decomposition; an inhalation and exhalation; an absorption and rendering up again; a putting on of matter by spirit and a divesting itself of it. As above, so below. The whole course of one's individual evolution is a descent into, and a re-emergence out of, matter, an encumbering of oneself with it and then a freeing of oneself from it.

We find that the tendency with which we come into life is one of absorption, a disposition to take to ourselves—possessions, knowledge, power. It is a disposition which we cannot easily set aside and which—a truth we must face—cannot be effectively suppressed, either from within or without. But it is the common experience of men that happiness does not lie in that direction however far we go, and it is the agreed wisdom of the sages of all time that it is in **being able** to render up possessions, power, etc., that we find a happiness that is secure. I have emphasised the words, "being able", because I want it to be quite clear that the mere giving up of one's wealth, even to the uttermost farthing, will not of itself establish the kingdom of happiness, of

heaven, for us. The idea must be carefully guarded against of *quid pro quo*, of some Being who has absolute power over us, who for some reason is pleased when we wrench ourselves from certain things that we most cherish, and who will reward us by putting us in a condition of things in which the occasions of pain will be absent. It is in **being able** to part with what I might call the supports that keep us in happiness, and yet being able to keep one's feet. It is the happiness with which an infant that has just established a sense of security on its own legs dispenses with the aid of its elders; with which a boy who is learning to skate or cycle dispenses with his attendant supporters; or with which, when he is learning to swim, he throws aside his water-wings or whatever else he has been using to keep him afloat. The kingdom of happiness, then, consists in being able to put aside power or possessions **and be the happier therefor.** The happiness is of **our own making** and we do not need to wait for it at the hands of another, and it is our own as long as we care to maintain it.

The Other Cheek

Our Lord tells us not to oppose force to force. But to follow this injunction in the Christlike way, to set aside power without heartburning or regret, maintaining a sense of the security of one's happiness,

is a different thing altogether from allowing others to work their will on one without retaliating, suffering intense chagrin all the time, in the belief that there is someone who is watching it all and who will reward one and wreak a terrible vengeance on the others, the vengeance which is in one's heart and which one is bursting to give vent to, but which one somehow succeeds in keeping the lid down on.

In the true nobility of soul that enables one to set aside the power to subject another's will to one's own by force—the dharma of "domination-poise" —one has the assurance of having all that the karma (of being domineering) is aiming at without actually doing the karma, the Assurance which enables one to set aside that karmic urge.

In Dharma Self-Expression and Self-Renunciation Meet

It is thus that the karmic urge is fully satisfied and at the same time entirely set aside. Perfect Self-expression meets with perfect Self-renunciation.

Nirvana

Nirvana is that perfect detachment from **all** one's karmas that makes one's happiness and peace of mind independent of Karma. It is the skill of the skater who, while he moves along with entire freedom, does not depend for his safety upon having a

guaranteed open way before him and can pull himself up immediately anything crops up in front and makes a tumble or a collision imminent. Perfect freedom of movement combined with perfect control.

CHAPTER XVIII

SACRIFICE BY WISDOM

Better than sacrifice by adventitious aids is sacrifice by wisdom, O Parantapa. All Karma in its entirety is brought to an end by wisdom.

Bhagavad Gita, IV, 33.

From what has so far been seen it's clear that in order to banish pain and suffering from our life we must end our bondage to Karma.

Self-Repression and Self-Torture Will Not End Karma

But when one sets about to sever the bonds, one begins to realize the colossal nature of the task. Those who have striven to bring under control a single artificial habit like smoking will understand what a herculean labour it must be to control a habit that has been in use probably millions of years. And think, our nature is made up of countless habits of this nature. It would seem that the task is an impossible one. And it **is** an impossible one, if what one has in mind is subjecting all these

habits to the control of one's will. There's not a single karmic wheel, not one eddy in our nature, which the force of even the greatest will can stop. That is, stop **finally.** It's sometimes possible to stay it for months and even years by dint of the exercise of immense will power, but in doing so one inflicts as much pain on oneself as one would have suffered in the ordinary course of events; and, as soon as one's will is relaxed, Karma is found to be alive as ever. To go on holding it back one has to go on torturing oneself. Nothing will ever be achieved by just damming up Karma. In fact, the attempt to "conquer" Karma is itself actuated by Karma, that of Wrath. One sets out against it as if one were going to war on something reprehensible and, the only thing tangible that one can lay hands on being one's own body, one does violence to that. The instruments that man has from time to time devised for inflicting pain on himself would, if put together by a collector, fill a large chamber of a museum: beds of nails, hair shirts, whips for self-flagellation, what not.

Flight from Karma Impossible

Nor is it possible to run away from Karma, or hide from it. We may seek refuge in the fastnesses of the mountains, the forest, or the desert, or anywhere else where the particular stimuli that initiate

Karma are not likely to be encountered. But we cannot help taking our memory and imagination with us, and with these we have quite sufficient to keep the karmic wheel awhirl. In fact, we are in a way worse off, because memory and imagination, like the advertisements in the papers, present us with all that is alluring in the stimuli and sedulously omit all those things that are repulsive, those very things that made us seek refuge in desert places from our Karma. It is true that most of it cannot be indulged, but that in no way impedes Desire, which, gathering force, drives one back where it **can** have satisfaction.

The Way Out

Are we then to remain forever the slaves of our karma? Is there no way of freeing ourselves from it?

There is but one way of throwing off the bondage of Karma, and that is by unmasking the Illusion in it. Scrutinize every urge that you feel; analyse it carefully; and you will find that its foundations are Illusion, error. Remove that error, and Karma falls to bits.

Let us take an example. The mayor-magistrate of a town has a woman arraigned before him for causing a disturbance. His sympathetic and experienced eye sees at a glance that she is one of

those, more sinned against than sinning, who readily fall victims to further injustice. While he is enquiring into her case she surprises everybody by spitting in his face. Karma at once becomes operative. The thought jumps to his mind of a savage attack that must be repelled; of the outraged dignity of the law; of his own sorry appearance in the eyes of his subordinates. The urge immediately seizes him to punish the offender with all the severity that lies at his command.

But there follows almost as immediately the thought: Is not hallucination taking possession of me and presenting to my imagination a savage, formidable beast with deadly intent? But what is there in reality before me? A poor woman whose power to do me any real harm is negligible. And it was not **my** face she spat upon; it was not against **me** that all her vituperation was let loose; her terrible hatred is not directed at **me** but at a figment of her own imagination; it was this that she abused; it was this that she spat upon. If I invest myself in this character that her diseased brain has created, I make **myself** a victim to her hallucination. No, I am not what she imagines, but a kindly, sympathetic man, and will show her that she is very much deceived. (To his attendants) Have her taken away to my hospital and treated at my expense, as she sadly needs care and attention.

He might have used the powers vested in him and condemned her to severe punishment. He might have allowed himself to be deluded that he was dealing with something dangerous and terrible and have felt the greater satisfaction in overcoming it. But, in doing so, he would have been allowing himself to be carried helplessly along on the stream of Karma, that of Wrath, the urge to crush antagonism. Carried where? To an occasion when the greater power will be, not in his hands, but in those of his opponent. He will still be swirled along by the urge to down his opponent, maddened by *indriya*, and believing that he is opposed by something dangerous and terrible. And the greater will be his sufferings in finding himself worsted. By casting off hallucination and putting aside his wrath on the earlier occasion, he can now see things with a clearer eye, see how little the thing at issue really matters, and give his opponent the victory with perfect equanimity.

Thus, by analysing Karma or—let me invent a word, an Indo-Hellenic hybrid—KARMANALYSIS[1], one can free oneself from all Karma.

[1] I should suggest the name, Karmanalysis, not only for this process of analysing specific instances of karma as they occur, but also for the science which we shall build up, the purpose of which will be an accurate observation of the instinctive habits, not only of humans, but also of our fellow creatures in the animal world, and an attempt to discover the origins of those habits. It will, of course, be Human Karmanalysis with which we shall be primarily concerned.

But this needs long years of practice [1]. Not only is it necessary to be able to unmask Illusion, but one must be able to do so **quickly**, before Volition has "got up steam." It is this ability to see through error and to do so quickly that constitues that "wisdom" spoken of in ancient scriptures, with which one destroys or "burns away" Karma.

Better than sacrifice by adventitious aids is sacrifice by wisdom, O Parantapa. All Karma in its entirety is brought to an end by wisdom. As the burning fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so doth the fire of wisdom reduce all Karma to ashes.[2]

Bhagavad Gita, IV, 33, 37.

There are two words here that require to be well understood, "sacrifice," and "wisdom."

[1] The cycle of thought or train of reasoning which leads from a karmic urge to the yielding up of it, and which is cultivated only after long, earnest and sustained effort, is the *dhammachakka* (Wheel of Dharma) which gives one poise from that particular karma The work of setting up that cycle of thought is styled *dhammachakkappavattana*—the setting in motion of the Wheel of Dharma.

[2] With this quotation from the *Bhagavad Gita* compare the following :

The accumulated fuel heaped up by the power of Karma this the fire of wisdom alone can consume.

Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King.

By severing the root of ignorance
It breaks in pieces Karma's living car.

Psalms of the Early Buddhists.

Wisdom

Take the latter first. Wisdom is **not** knowledge. It is the ability to deduce a required fact with sufficient speed and accuracy to make it unnecessary to store it in one's memory, that fact being deduced from observable phenomena or from other facts which can be arrived at in the same way. The greater one's wisdom, the greater is the amount of knowledge one allows to drop out of one's memory. Logically, then, perfect wisdom would connote a memory stored with no knowledge whatsoever. But we can only speculate whether this is in reality the case.

That wisdom is greater than knowledge and is, in fact, the renunciation of knowledge is a truth that is in a way recognized by every competent school teacher. Children are presented with as few facts as possible, but are made to arrive at them by their own native powers of reasoning. Formulae are eschewed and children are made to work as independent problems several involving the same principle, and are allowed to find out for themselves the common principle running through them all.

The same thing must be done in sacrificing Karma. Every bit of karma that confronts one must be treated as something of a kind one has never met before. One must not hark back to what one has been told about it or what one remembers

from past encounters with the same problem. Tackle it as something new and work it out afresh. In this way one trains one's cognitive faculties and acquires the ability to separate truth from the welter of illusion that Karma offers one.

Sacrifice

The word "sacrifice" has in it a connotation of pain, a wrench, tearing yourself from something or somebody that it hurts you to be parted from. This idea is an outgrowth of religious systems whose conception of God was that of a being in human form, stirred by human urges, including those of Avarice and Wrath. It was assumed that his wrath could be placated by ministering to his greed for the very things one cherished most oneself. This conception is somewhat modified where the idea of divine acquisitiveness is dropped, but where the idea persists that the purpose of "doing good" is that of pleasing God, there being behind that the idea of being protected by a Deity who has been rendered friendly to one. In either case one does things that one judges to be good, even if in doing them one suffers heartburning. In fact it is held that the greater the wrench the greater is one's merit.

Now no sacrifice is complete which occasions the least heartburning, because in true sacrifice one

" turns away from " the objects of Karma without any desire for them. Even more, one experiences a certain joy in throwing off the impedimenta to which Karma had attached one, and the illusion of which one has discovered.

Furthermore, in true sacrifice one experiences no urge to make a parade of it ; it is altogether an affair between oneself and one's heavenly Father—the divine principle in one. Hence the significance of our Lord's injunction :

Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven. Matthew, VI, 1.

I see someone raising the objection : How can one speak of " sacrificing " a thing when the giving up of it doos not affect one in the least ? A somewhat similar objection would be : How can one be said to " sacrifice " a thing when one knows that it is always within one's power to recover it whenever one should need it ? A man gives away a fortune secure in the confidence that his business acumen would help him to another as soon as his need for it should arise : is that sacrifice ? Another allows useful knowledge to slip from his memory, trusting to his well-trained and masterly intellect to rebuild it at need : is that sacrifice ?

Let me put a counter question : Can a person be said to sacrifice a thing when he gives it up feeling

the wrench terribly, but believing that he will be rewarded an hundredfold in the hereafter? Wouldn't it be more correct to style that "exchange at an excellent profit.?"

CHAPTER XIX

DHARMA

The Common Concept of Happiness

THE common concept of happiness is rather negative than positive; people are somewhat vague and indefinite as to what the heaven of their dreams will consist of, but are generally quite definite in their minds of a number of things of which it certainly will **not** consist. Happiness means for most people, not so much the enjoyment of any particular pleasure, as security from all pain. The human will, not merely to extrude pain from one's life, but to shut, bolt and bar the door against it forever, must be made, then, the origin (in the mathematical sense) or point of reference of all conduct.

Now when we try and visualize a condition of things in which pain is impossible, we picture it as one from which the **occasions** of pain have been excluded. First to be excluded are one's fellow men. But not all. It's impossible to think of oneself as being happy in complete isolation, and so one

pictures in one's heaven a limited number of people living in perfect fellowship and harmony. We have no difficulty in imagining ourselves living in such a community, amongst the members of which there is a good understanding and a certain amount of give and take, all in a good spirit, but we cannot easily entertain the thought of extending the business of give and take to power and wealth, especially if our own part in the business is one of give and not take.

People try and overcome the difficulty which this presents by either excluding power and wealth altogether from their picture of heaven or, more commonly—since the first calls for much furious thinking—by putting all power and wealth into the hands of one Being, whom all accept as Supreme.

The Fetter of Attraction

But we do not in either case dispose of the difficulty. Those who have known these things on earth and for whom they still have a lure are not likely to find any lasting happiness without them. This means that the opportunities that life in this world offers of satisfying ambition and possession-hunger will in course of time lure them back from heaven to physical life on earth. It amounts to this that as long as there remains the least vestige of Karma that has not been renounced, it will bring one back into incarnation sooner or later. After all, we

incarnate of our own free will, and it is only by renouncing life in the physical that we end the cycle of birth and death.

The Fetter of Aversion

Renunciation does not mean conceiving a distaste for, or aversion from, life on earth. That detestation of the world that turns men into recluse misanthropes, or leads them to put an end to their lives, brings them back in due course to the world they had anathematized and abjured for ever. The fact that one hates a thing is an indication that it has a terror for one. Now the fear is not in the thing, but in oneself, and will remain within one, causing one to be unsettled in mind, ultimately becoming so insistent that it will lead one back to try to get the better of the object of the fear and to turn defeat into victory. That instinct which urges us away from the world, from life, and from our fellow beings, would lead us, not **to**, but **away from**, heaven.

Love and hatred are caused by Karma and they say that Karma has its origin in delusion; Karma is the root of birth and death; and birth and death they call misery. *Jain Sutras* (*Uttaradhyana*).

Attraction to and aversion from the objects of sense abide in the senses; let none come under the dominion of these two; they are his enemies.

Bhagavad Gita, III, 34.

Renunciation

It is impossible to conceive of a condition of things in which a number of people who have " the formative will unrenounced " [1] can all be happy for all time. There is but one way of establishing perfect security from suffering and that is by establishing perfect control over all one's karma. We have seen what this sacrifice or renunciation of Karma means. It does not mean the entire cessation of Karma, but the breaking of its bonds, the loosening of its hold on one, " doing Karma without attachment."

There have been those who, possessed of wealth, have found it to be a burden, have discovered the subconscious illusion that had made them go on retaining hold of their wealth as it had deceived them into amassing it; who have disabused their minds of the illusion and have learnt to enjoy far greater happiness with a mere fraction of their former wealth than they had found in their whole fortune.

Then comes the stage of the *bhikkhu*, when one strips oneself of all one's possessions and trusts oneself entirely to the goodness of one's fellow men for one's daily needs.

[1] *That which is called renunciation know thou that as yoga, O Pandava; nor doth any one become a yogi with the formative will unrenounced.* *Bhagavad Gita*, VI, 2.

Now it must be conceded that a man who depends on the uncertain bounty of others for the barest necessities of life and who even then does not retain more than suffices for his immediate needs cannot, ordinarily, be as useful to society as if he had a fairly comfortable sufficiency to supply his regular wants. The Law of Utility stands good always. I hope I will be pardoned if I state it—or rather, a phase of it—as briefly and simply as I can.

Supposing a man—whose income is small as incomes go—has that income increased by 5%: it will probably produce a **more than** 5% increase in his utility. If that again is increased a little, there will be a **more than** proportionate increase in his utility. But this doesn't go on indefinitely. A point is reached when the increase in utility is just proportionate to the increase in income, and from that point onwards it is less than proportionate and keeps on diminishing.

The more advanced in evolution a person is, the higher is the point to which his income can be profitably increased. But here again there appears to be a turning point: a stage in evolution is reached beyond which the fuel consumption needed to produce one's cruising speed becomes ever less, if I might say so without irreverence – because that stage is at the threshold of divinity.

Bhikkhuship is not assumed as a permanent fixture; nor, for that matter, does it appear to be quite necessary that one **must** pass through that stage. It is merely an exercise that serves the purpose of satisfying one that one can face penury with perfect equanimity and that the karma that makes one go on clinging to wealth has been entirely dissolved.

It has much the same effect as the practice of some boys, when they are learning to skate, of deliberately letting themselves fall. A fall ceases to have any terrors for them, and their skating usually turns out to be less cramped and more graceful than that of others who regard a fall as a serious matter, to be carefully guarded against.

Fasting is in the same category as bhikkhuship and is an exercise that serves the purpose—apart from its physiological benefits—of breaking up the terror that the prospect of going a day, a week, a month, without food has ordinarily for people. But we cannot go on fasting interminably, and even during a fast extending beyond a few days one becomes gradually weaker and less capable of any great effort. But one derives the sovereign benefit of being able to face serenely a fairly protracted period of starvation if the necessity should arise.

Thus do we learn to "do karma without attachment."

Therefore, without attachment, do Karma that is necessary; for by doing Karma without attachment man obtains supreme bliss.

As the ignorant act from attachment to Karma, O Bharata, so should the wise act without attachment, having the common welfare at heart.

Bhagavad Gita, III, 19, 25.

One does only what is necessary to establish poise, balance, but does not allow Karma to overreach itself.

Dharma Is Poise

This maintenance of poise or equilibrium is DHARMA.

The word "dharma" literally means "supporting," that is, supporting oneself (as opposed to letting oneself fall), keeping one's balance, and so, poise. **Dharma is Poise.**

Dharma is Righteousness, literally. Righteousness means uprightness, being erect, keeping one's spiritual feet, maintaining one's balance, in contradistinction to moral "obliquity," "falling" into sin.

Dharmaraj and the Kingdom of Righteousness

Our Lord's "Kingdom of Righteousness" is identically the same thing, in essence and in nomenclature, as Dharmaraj. "Kingdom" is not concrete here, but abstract; there is no reference to any

particular place. The word "rule," or "regime," would avoid the ambiguity contained in "kingdom." Now **that** is the exact meaning of the word "raj," —rule, regime. So Dharmaraj is the Kingdom of Righteousness, the regime of equipoise.

Poise Does not Mean Restraint

When we talk of the maintenance of equilibrium we must not have in mind restraint applied so as to prevent going out of equilibrium, but the ready recovery of it when thrown off one's balance.

Let us suppose a person is given the opportunity of possessing untold wealth. Of the majority of mankind it would probably be true to say that any one of them finding himself in such a position would shrink from the opportunity, simply through diffidence, not daring to be wealthy. These are people of a tamasic nature. There would also be a large minority—rajasic in nature—who would go on taking as much as they could without ever seeming to get any nearer saturation point. But there would be some who, having amassed varying amounts, would recover their balance and turn away from the rest of the wealth. This recovery of poise at any point whatsoever is Dharma—or the beginnings of it. One learns to sacrifice karma and recover one's poise at ever earlier stages until, ultimately, recovery follows as instantaneously upon the karmic reaction

as that does upon the stimulus. Dharma is then instantaneous, as the Lord Buddha's was said to be.

*I do not stay away from him even for a moment, O Brahmana, from Gotama of great understanding, from Gotama of great Wisdom, who taught me the Dhamma, **the instantaneous, the immediate,** the destruction of desire, freedom from pain, whose likeness is nowhere. Sutta Nipata (Parayanasutta).*

Dharma is Consummate Skill

Dharma is skill—or skilfulness—over Karma, the kind that is referred to in the following extract from a letter written by Lawrence of Arabia to Robert Graves.

I have to make 700 pounds more. Of course, with my notoriety to help me, I can easily make that. Easier still could I make ten times that; it's stopping short that needs skilfulness.

In life the forces of Karma are of many kinds and are constantly tending to throw one off one's balance, forces which are acting on us from all directions, so that in essaying to recover one's balance from one karma one finds oneself being carried away by another. One finds oneself selfish and niggardly and in an effort to remedy this becomes senselessly prodigal. Or one recoils from sentimentality, only to find oneself becoming unfeeling in nature. And these forces are **constantly** acting on all of us, from

the smallest to the greatest, so that it requires consummate skill to maintain one's poise in all this mælstrom of forces.

Firmly established in yoga, perform karma without attachment, unaffected by success or failure. Poise is called yoga.

Joined to Buddhi, one abandoneth here both good and evil karma. Therefore cleave thou to yoga. Yoga is skill over Karma.

Bhagavad Gita, II, 48, 50.

The word "yoga" literally means "yoking," "junction," and is an etymological relative of both these words. In its original sense it was used of that condition in which one was "joined to Buddhi," "one with one's heavenly Father," and so was synonymous with "Dharma." "Poise is called yoga." But the word "yoga" has come to mean, not the condition of union with the divine, but that discipline whereby one establishes it.

However, in the verses quoted above "yoga" is used to mean exactly the same thing as "Dharma" or "Righteousness." "Poise is called yoga." The definition of Yoga given here by Shri Krishna is a perfect definition of Dharma. Dharma is skill over Karma.

Karma and Dharma Symbolised

Let us try and symbolise this.

Karma is commonly represented by a rolling wheel to which man is bound. Picture such a wheel. In one position of the wheel the man is seen at the top of it and shows every sign of pleasure and gratification. In another he is seen under it and is contorted with pain.[1] That is ATTACHMENT TO KARMA.

Now another picture. The wheel is still there, but the man has detached himself from it and balances himself on it.[2] There is neither pleasure nor pain on his face, but the serenity and ineffable bliss of one who is no longer subject to illusion and has renounced Karma and its weary round of ups and downs. That is DHARMA.

Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, our Lord tells us. It seems indeed to give no better a footing than a tight-rope, with "the opposites"[3] threatening on either side; and all the skill of the

[1] See p. 147, line 7.

[2] I shouldn't advice anyone to try and represent all this in real pictures. Nor, even in one's mental pictures should one scrutinize things too closely. Similes, even the best of them, are like a mirror that has been broken and has large pieces out of it, and which, even when whole and entire, was uneven, and distorted things in reflecting them In similes one sees in reflection only parts of the original, and even those parts are seen somewhat distorted. But they're useful in enabling us to form some idea of the original when we cannot see it directly.

[3] *By the delusion of the pairs of opposites, sprung from attraction and repulsion, O Bharata, all beings walk this universe wholly deluded, O Parantapa.*

But those men of pure deeds, in whom sin is come to an end, they freed from the delusive pairs of opposites, worship Me, steadfast in vows. *Bhagavad Gita*, VII, 27, 28

world's champion tight-rope walker is as nothing compared to what we must have at our command to walk the Way of Righteousness, Dhammapada. This supreme skill over all Karma is not acquired between matins and vespers, not in a year, nor even in a lifetime, but only after many lives of prodigious effort.

"Putting on" Righteousness

A common concept of Righteousness views it as a sort of garment to be put on; all that appears necessary is making up one's mind to assume it. When this view of Righteousness is taken, of something outside oneself that one takes to oneself, no problem arises as to the nature and origin of the propensities in our nature that occasion sin. It is assumed that as soon as Righteousness is adopted these things just cease to be. Hence no serious effort has hitherto been made in the West to discover their origin and how they have come to have a place in human nature. But in India it was known in the long ago that they have a karmic origin and subsist on Illusion and, more important still, Righteousness is attained **only** by obtaining mastery over those propensities, and not by acquiring new "good habits."

Sinners cannot annihilate their karma by new karma; the pious annihilate their karma by abstention from karma. *Jain Sutras* (*Sutrakritanga*, I, 12).

Paying Karma as the Price for Dharma

From what has so far been said of it, Dharma is given a very negative appearance, a negation of all one's nature. We have so far been talking of "annihilating" Karma, "burning" it, "renouncing" it, and so forth. But the destruction of Karma does not leave a void, an emptiness, behind. Hence the Sage speaks, not of **sacrificing** karma, but "paying" it as a price for jewels, perfumes, ambrosia, etc.

Such are the Dharmas sold in that bazaar,
The shop of the Enlightened One, the Blest,
Pay Karma as the price, O ye ill-clad,
Pay and put on these lustrous Buddha-gems.

Bad thoughts can ne'er arise beneath the brow,
Encircled by this coronet of gems,
It charms away perplexed and wandering thoughts;
Make it your own, buy it, put on the crown.

He who has knowledge as his jewelled wealth
Will not continue long in outward form;
Soon will he reach Nirvana, on rebirth
In any world no longer take delight.

All the people that dwell in a house look up
To their Lord when he wears his crown of gems—
The wide world of the gods and of men look up
To the wearer of Freedom's diadem.

The Milindapanha.

What are these Buddha-gems, these perfumes, this ambrosia? They are Dharma, or the dharmas (that is, Dharma in its many forms). The similes used bring out different features of the dharmas: their surpassing worth (jewels [1]), their irradiating influence (perfumes), their subtle sweetness (ambrosia).

But we do not directly cultivate these dharmas or graces: what we do is establish poise in karma, and in so doing we establish the particular dharma or grace.

Distinction between Virtue and Dharma

Distinguish carefully between a grace and a virtue. The virtues, such as Courage, Thrift, Resolution, Thoroughness, are karmic in their nature and are characterized by strength, impetus; in the absence of a wise control they tend to overreach themselves. The graces—Nobility, Equanimity, Integrity, etc.—are characterized by poise.

Let us consider some of the latter; to do so we must consider what karma one "pays as the price."

Nobility

Power must be renounced. At first it is merely a renunciation of the **exercise** of power, which, in its most elementary form, is physical strength. Thus

[1] The *pearl of great price*, which one buys at the cost of all that one has. See *Matthew*, XIII, 46.

we have the Nobility of, say, a well-set-up boy who, tempted to work havoc on a weaker boy who has wronged him in some way, sees how remote the possibility is of the latter doing him any injury worth considering, and puts the urge away from him. Then there is the Nobility shown by those who are vested with civic or political power, as in the case cited earlier in this book.[1] But there is a higher Nobility which consists in renouncing not merely the use or exercise of power, but power itself.

There is probably no word in the English language which in its intrinsic meaning and in actual usage has a wider application to dharmas of different kinds than NOBILITY. Could it be better named? —Nobility, that is know-ability (from the Latin, *gnosco* and *habilitas*), the ability to know what IS and see through what IS NOT.

The name is applied to that dharma which consists in showing Mercy. Justice requires an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The so-called Justice of the law courts is very largely national karma, the wrath of a whole race, expressing itself through its legislature and its judiciary. But Mercy is above power. It is like all Dharma, an attribute of God Himself. And, again like all Dharma, it is twice blessed. There is yet another feature of Mercy referred to in Portia's famous plea that is a feature

[1] See p. 297, last para.

of all Dharma: it is not strained; neither gods nor men can force Dharma into being in another. Lawmakers have for centuries been employing to that end all the skill that they can muster, but have succeeded in producing only a colourable imitation of the real article.

Karmic Liability of Those Who Administer Punishment

In connection with the administration of the law and the imposition of punishment on lawbreakers the question is often asked whether the government officials concerned are answerable karmically for the share they take in the infliction of pain on their fellow beings.

Now there can be no doubt about it that whenever emotion and volition act, they add to the momentum of Karma. It doesn't matter in the very least in whose name one does a thing or how many many millions more there may be who do it, if one's feelings and one's will go with it, it has identically the same effects as any other piece of karma.

But the judiciary and the executive officials are not the only ones who partake of this karma: those who framed the laws and those who moved in any way for their enaction have their share; and the millions who read up in the newspapers the accounts of cases under trial and allow their passions

to be roused one way or another incur the karmic results of so doing.

But let us not forget that Karma is not altogether a matter for regret.

Teach the people to see . . . that it is our own Karma, the cause producing the effect, that is our own judge, our ***saviour*** *in future lives.*

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, p. 8.

Other Dharmas

Besides Nobility, we have the Buddha-gems of Equanimity, Truth, Serenity, Gentleness, all of which can be seen to be the result of bringing karma of one kind or another under control, namely, Worrying, Deceit, Excitability, and Asperity, respectively. Needless to say, this is not by any means an exhaustive list. Those who want a book that fairly covers the whole ground of Dharma can hardly do better than study *At the Feet of the Master*, which is a veritable mine of precious gems, that is anyone's who cares to work it. But one cannot lay too much emphasis on the word "**work.**"

Why "Graces?"

We are doubly justified in calling the dharmas, the qualities which result from renunciation of Karma, "Graces." Firstly, because of their being graceful. Secondly, because they are manifestations

of what is known in Christian theology as " Divine Grace."

Dharma Is Always Graceful

True Dharma is always graceful. And the more perfect it is, the more perfect is the grace. Because grace means poise, and poise means the absence of fear. Let us examine the nature of Grace, first in a physical manifestation of it.

We have all seen grace displayed in skating, dancing, diving, swimming, walking, and other movements; and some have found themselves pondering over a problem that it presents: Why should a spectator, passively looking on, experience pleasure in watching the graceful movements of another? And why does he feel a sense of annoyance and irritation in having to look on at clumsiness and gaucherie in the execution of anything?

The secret lies in that most important fact—or " law ", as we should term it—Karma is infectious. Skating, if we take that as our example, is—like all movement, all progress—a process of alternately losing one's balance and then recovering it. Now, the moment one loses one's balance, anyone who happens to be watching experiences fear and, with it, the urge towards re-establishment of equilibrium. So, if one is not very expert in doing so, the on-looker experiences irritation. On the other hand,

the graceful skater passes easily and with perfect assurance from unbalance to balance. It is this easy and confident transition that makes graceful skating such a pleasure to watch ; the onlooker experiences the fear, but that makes it possible to experience the sense of assurance [1], " faith ", with which the skater recovers his balance.

Now, the more perfect Dharma is, the readier is the recovery from fear, and the more perfect is the grace manifested. In perfect Dharma there is a Grace that is extremely delicate and subtle.

Dhamma, O King, is the most minute and subtle.
Milindapanha, III, 7, (14).

This subtle and delicious Dhamma.
Sutta Nipata (*Dhammikasutta*, 8).

Dharma Is Gracious

Dharma is a manifestation of " Divine Grace." All dharmas are " attributes of God Himself," proceeding, as they do, from the divine principle in each one of us, which sees creation to be a continuum, recognizes that one is not merely a part of all life, but that one **is** all life, limitless, continuous.

[1] *The knowledge by which the Noble Ones know*
The stages they've passed, and the road yet untrod,
Strive, O ye sons of the Conqueror, strive
*That jewel—***Assurance***—yourselves to obtain.*
Milindapanha

Dharma Is the Kingdom of God

In Dharma one is ruled by the God within and can truly be said to have entered the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is within you.

Luke, XVII, 21.

Dharma proceeds from a realisation of "I am," a consciousness of the absolute and unassailable immortality of all that matters in one's being.

Dharma Is the Kingdom of Heaven

It is the true and ultimate Happiness, the divine ambrosia of the ever-Life. In renouncing Karma we experience a far sweeter bliss than the pleasure-pain associated with the things to which Karma attaches us. Hence the commonly met expression, "*amrita-dharma.*"

Having tasted the sweetness of seclusion and tranquillity one becomes free from Fear and free from Kamma, drinking in the amrita (ambrosia or nectar) *of Dhamma.* *Sutta Nipata* (*Hirisutta*).

Verily they who drink this amrita-dharma, as taught herein, endued with Faith, having subjected themselves to me, devotees, are surpassingly dear to me. *Bhagavad Gita*, XII, 20.

It is the establishment of this *amrita-dharma* that our Lord refers to as the kingdom of Heaven. This

heaven is not in the gift of anyone, not even the gods; nor is it in the power of anyone or anything to despoil one of it.

In Benares, at the hermitage of Migadaya, the supreme Wheel of the kingdom of Dhamma has been set rolling by the Blessed One—that Wheel which not by any Samana or Brahmana, not by any God, by any Brahma or Mara, not by anyone in the universe, can ever be turned back.

Dhammachakkappavatanasutta.[1]

There is one and only one who can make or unmake this heaven for anybody, and that is the person himself. Obviously, those who are attached to the objects of Karma—wealth, power, etc.—debar themselves from knowing this bliss or from entering that kingdom. What our divine Lord said is literally true:

How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Mark, X, 24, 25.

In other words, it is absolutely, entirely, and categorically **impossible**.

Again, when the disciples, hungry for preferment, come and ask Him who will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, His reply is:

[1] See p. 300, footnote 1.

Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew, XVIII, 3.

Dharma and the "Golden Mean"

This does not mean being forever without any semblance of wealth or power. Does Dharma lie then in the "golden mean?" It does, provided we do not regard the "golden mean" as a fixed quantity, but as a variable, varying, not only with what is known as the "personal equation" of the person in question, but with time and place as well. Perhaps it would be begging the question to say that it lies at the point where one finds balance. And so, what would be Dharma for one would not be Dharma for another, however closely he may copy it.

Better thine own dharma, though destitute of merit, than the well-executed dharma of another.

Bhagavad Gita, III, 35.

Better for a boy to work out a sum in his own clumsy way than to copy the clever working of another, however skilfully it may have been done.

Perhaps we might define the "Golden Mean" as the meeting place of the Higher and Lower Selves, the point where both find themselves on common ground. Mind you, there is no question of a compromise. Neither concedes anything to the other, and yet they find themselves to be identical.

The lower self, for example, strives for the possession of wealth and as much of it as possible, and goes on doing so until it reaches a point when it contacts the higher self, which realizes that the whole world is one's own, eternally, incontestably, and no further desire to add to one's wealth is felt. This junction of the higher and lower selves will occur at ever earlier stages, until one learns, with but a poor showing of this world's goods, to feel far more perfect contentment than when one had an abundance of wealth. The lower self's urge remains but it is satisfied by the higher self realizing that one already has what karma urges one to.

Dharma Is Not up in the Clouds—

There are two mistakes that we are apt to make and which it is well to guard against.

1. There is a tendency to regard Dharma as being very lofty and difficult of attainment, and

2. to ascribe to it a certain finality: one attains Dharma—and there's an end; we have it for ever and ever.

1. Dharma, far from being up in the clouds, is sometimes—nay, daily—seen in very little things. The frozen face of a wit as he discharges his sallies of humour that convulse others with laughter, the composure of a man when informed of a financial loss he has suffered, the aplomb with which he

receives the news of an access of good fortune to him, the unruffled serenity with which he faces the wrath of another, are all examples of Dharma.

The term, Dharma, must be applied also to the self-recovery from repressive karma, as a result of which pent-up karma is released, because in that too there is the unmasking of Illusion and the dispelling of a Fear.

—Nor Is It Final

2. The second mistake we are apt to make is to regard Dharma as a thing which, once attained, is ours for ever after. Dharma is balance, recovery from the unbalance which Karma impelled one into. Needless to say, this in no way secures one for the future from being again impelled by Karma into unbalance, although it makes the recovery therefrom a little easier.

But there is no such thing as fixed Dharma, or call it Dharma-in-Anticipation. One may have decided, for example, that the sexual urge is just Karma, Illusion, and have made up one's mind to keep the urge in check whenever it should manifest itself, and may indeed succeed in suppressing it again and again. But that would not be Dharma. The suppressed urges, gathering force by being dammed up, would break through with added violence sooner or later. The urges have been

repressed by sheer will-force, not sacrificed through that Wisdom that sees into infinitude and that Assurance that grows from a sense of the ever-Life. The repression does not bring one that subtle bliss, that *amrita*, that always accompanies Dharma.

Perhaps another example may not be out of place. I have spoken of the facial calm with which a wit fires off his jokes as being one kind of Dharma. But there are those who keep their faces frozen by sheer repression of the smile that is bursting to overspread their features, a fact that does not escape the observant. But such burking of a natural impulse is not Dharma. It lacks that gracefulness that is the hall-mark of Dharma.

Good Karma Must Be Balanced

Balance, Dharma, must be established in Good Karma no less than in Bad, as much for one's own sake as that of others. It is quite easy to be carried away by Good Karma, and one must establish the skill which would bring it under control as soon as one found that one was going off the road or heading for trouble.

Trustfulness and Obedience are good karma—I am thinking here of those qualities that grow on one who has been under the care or tutelage of somebody whom one has found to be always wise and kindly : implicit trust in, and unquestioning obedience to,

those in authority over one, karmas which have a very delicious tang about them and which one is very apt to be heedless about, but which, carried into another environment, may bring one to grief.

By establishing perfect control over Good Karma one takes the barbs out of ingratitude and treachery, which, as a result, leave one scatheless when one comes up against them.

Helpfulness, again, is good karma. And this may take many forms: helpfulness as a guide, as a benefactor, or as one who is ready to help another do what he has in hand. But such help is very often declined and even resented by those whom one would fain assist. So one must learn to relax one's philanthropic bent at a moment's notice.

Or, even if the help would be welcomed, it will often be found more in the interests of the object of one's solicitude to allow him to do his job unassisted.

Sympathy and the tendency to do for others what one would do for oneself in the same circumstances are certainly good karma, and one is apt to believe that the more one does for others, the greater is one's merit. This is true up to a point. But beyond that point, it would seem, the greater one's interest in another, the more does one tend to give him opportunities of learning to help himself.

One must be careful to see that one does not become enslaved to Good Karma. There are people

who, having found the respect and good-will of others as a result of their fulfilling some function in the social organism, become afraid of a cessation of that activity. They see Life in that alone and cling tenaciously to it.

A variant of this is the proneness of people, when they have established a reputation for a particular good karma, to feel that they are bound by it when their better judgments would seem to indicate a different line of action.

Passing on Good Karma

If one has spent past lives and most of the present one in doing good works, one need have no qualms of conscience in rising, as it were, above them. The mantle falls on other shoulders. Karma, good and bad, is catching, because love and hatred are catching. One may establish poise from a karma, but others catch the karma and put it in execution. Our Lord, when He was set upon in Gethsemane, possibly experienced a momentary urge to give as good as He got, but **immediately** put it aside. Not so Peter, who proceeded to use his sword in his Master's defence until corrected by Him.

He comes to the river Vijara and crosses it by the mind alone, and there shakes off his good and evil karma. His beloved relatives obtain the good, his unbeloved relatives the evil karma. And as a man

driving in a chariot might look at the two wheels (without being touched by them), thus he will look at day and night, thus at good and evil karma, and at all pairs. Being freed from good and freed from evil, he, the knower of Brahma, moves towards Brahma. *Kaushitaki Upanishad.*

Making over his good karma to his friends and his evil karma to his enemies, he attains the eternal Brahma by the practice of meditation.

The Laws of Manu, VI, 79.

CHAPTER XX

THE TIME-WORN PATH

East and West

IT may perhaps appear to one accustomed to the Western way of looking at things that the Eastern viewpoint is somewhat selfish. The Western conception of a godly life, the way that leads to heaven, envisages a life spent in good works; whereas in the East the emphasis is rather on self-conquest, the burning away or annihilation of one's evil propensities with a view to banishing pain from one's life. But in the West the ultimate object is the same, security from suffering, though it is given rather a concrete form—Heaven. The difference of view as to the way in which this is to be achieved is due chiefly to two fallacies that have persisted in Christian countries.

The first is a belief in a single life; and, as a sort of corollary, that the manner in which one conducts it determines one's entire future till eternity. The second is the belief in the existence of a **personal**

God, who is responsible for one's existence and for all those things that occur to one, now and hereafter, and in whose hands rests the decision as to what that hereafter is to be. To placate this God becomes then one's entire purpose in life; and, since this short span of life precludes any thought of attempting to get down to the root of sin and deracinating it, one's only hope lies in filling one's life with such works as are declared to be pleasing to God. But when it is borne in on us that we are here entirely of our own volition, and that the making and unmaking for us of happiness and sorrow lie entirely in our own hands, things take on a somewhat different aspect.

The belief in a personal God to whom we can appeal in our suffering and who will take us just as we are at the end of a life of "fearing God" and install us in a heaven of eternal bliss is certainly very soul-satisfying. But it is not easy to make it square with man's claim to, and belief in, free will. Consonant with absolute freedom of will, for others as much as for oneself, the only security from suffering that one can make for oneself lies in a perfect control over all one's karma. And are the Masters any the less beneficent for helping us to solve our problems, rather than solving them for us?

The simile of the skater is the fittest I can think of to give a likeness of the balanced life, Dharmaraj.

All one's movements are perfectly open, free and unconstrained. All Karma is entirely free, but subject to perfect skill which prevents it overreaching itself. One is without fear of one's own nature when one understands it well.

In this Kingdom of Heaven all one's dreams may be said to come true; one gives full scope to all one's hopes and wishes, but yields them up almost instantaneously, realizing that one enjoys them best in not enjoying them.

Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Luke, XVII, 33.

He who sees Akarma in Karma, and Karma in Akarma, he is wise among men, he is balanced, even while doing Karma. *Bhagavad Gita*, IV, 18.

Four Things Necessary: 1. Discernment

To obtain mastery over Karma there are four things necessary. The first is Discernment, the seeing eye—as opposed to the eye that "seeing, sees not"—which discriminates between Reality and Illusion, and to which human nature in general and one's own nature in particular is an open book. Mere knowledge by itself, however compendious, does not constitute Discernment; what is needed is that intellectual acumen which can take and unravel completely life's tangled skein as one finds it. It is

identically the same talent as forms the basis of mathematical ability, by which I mean, not mathematical knowledge, but acumen, such as may be displayed in attacking the most elementary problems. Pythagoras, it is said, required "skill in numbers" as a *sine qua non* of all aspirants before he would accept them as disciples. By "skill in numbers" is not meant the ability to juggle with figures and give them a quasi-occult significance, but just straightforward mathematical talent, the native skill in figures that at least one boy or girl in almost every school form evinces, the ability to keep in one's mental grip a number of independent or seemingly independent premises and express from them a required bit of information. There is no better exercise for sharpening and strengthening the mind unto Discernment than mathematical practice, particularly in geometry.

For those who find mathematics unalluring as a pastime the business of keeping the intellect in good trim can, of course, be done in other ways, among the most attractive of which is the playing of such games as Chess or Bridge or working at the Chess and Bridge problems which one finds in various journals. Bridge is less useful than Chess for our purpose, because of the large element of chance in it, and because it can be, and is to a large extent, worked out piecemeal, and so does not of necessity

develop mental grip, the power to hold in one's mind and keep constantly within one's purview a number of separate facts, all of which are relevant to the subject under examination. But there are those who play all thirteen tricks together, so to speak, and who derive therefrom much the same benefit as is got from mathematical practice. There is, besides, the additional benefit of acquiring what may be called intellectual adroitness; that is, not merely the ability to get a grasp of things, but facility in doing so **quickly** and, moreover, of doing so in the midst of the average distractions of life.

But, although the playing of such games cultivates **quickness** of discernment, in one respect, and that a most important one, mathematics scores over them. Mathematics—it is a commonplace of observation—is the most exact of all sciences, and it is comparatively easy to make quite sure whether the result at which you have arrived is true or false. The habit of verifying your results and satisfying yourself that they are true develops two very valuable qualities: The first is **faith** in your powers of discernment, which gives added strength to it. The second is that valuable sense which tells you unerringly that you are right or wrong, a peculiar sense of satisfaction that you feel when you are right, and a peculiar uneasiness, which you soon come to recognize, when your result is false, no

matter how much it may bear on its face the appearance of truth.

2. Love

Ordinarily, one does not pause to consider one's actions. There must be a watchman, ever alert, to make one consider what one is doing and to awaken the faculty of Discernment. That watchman is a sensitized heart, the Love that sees that all beings are one with oneself, and senses all created life as a continuum. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This means more than "Love your neighbour as you love yourself;" it means, rather, "Be conscious that your neighbour **is** yourself and love him as such."

To attune one's heart to the world around there is nothing that is more helpful than noble literature and art. It is hardly necessary to add the word, "noble," because true art is always noble and ennobling. There is a spurious art that merely presents us with the stimuli that stir up karma of one kind or another. True art goes further; it leads up to the sacrifice of karma.

3. Courage and Faith

But one might find that, in spite of having these two qualities, one is still attached to Karma, and that one cannot bring oneself to let go of the

security, or sense of security, of that anchorage; one cannot get rid of the Fear that is at the root of Karma. The third requirement, then, is Courage and Faith. Primarily and principally, Faith in oneself, Faith in the God within one, the "Dweller in the Innermost," to bring one, cut loose from the seeming security of Karma, safe to one's haven (or heaven) somehow, some time. Faith in the God manifested in one's fellow beings. Faith in that supreme manifestation of God, the Powers Who rule this earth and watch over the destinies of all life upon it.

It may be thought that in these pages I have not made due mention of the Lords of Wisdom and Compassion, Who have ages since gone over that very road which we are toiling along to-day and Whose guidance is altogether indispensable if we are to reach our goal within a reasonable stretch of time; that I have treated the subject too impersonally, after the manner of the Oriental books.[1] It must be admitted, as against this, that it is possible to give **too much** prominence to the personal side, with the result that we lose sight of that vital fact that at first and last it is **our own** efforts to win through to Liberation upon which our success really depends.

[1] *In the Oriental books both these Paths are described quite impersonally, as though no private Masters existed.*
LEADBEATER: *The Masters and The Path*, p. 129

Another result is that the impression is created that Liberation can be achieved by devoting oneself to the Masters' work, or what one believes to be such. Glorious as it is to work for Them, such work must not be regarded as the Path leading to Liberation, any more than doing some work for the Governor of the Bank of England is of necessity a training in high finance.

There is furthermore the impression created that Initiation is the same thing as Liberation, whereby one frees oneself from karmic shackles. Now the Great White Brotherhood is a body of Supermen drawn together by Their common Love of Their fellow beings and Their great zeal to do all that They can for their welfare. Naturally They welcome into Their body anyone who is filled with the same zeal. But, before They admit him to membership, They satisfy Themselves that all his selfish karma has been yielded up and that he is not likely to use for the advancement of personal ends the great advantages and privileges which that membership confers. So Initiation is, as it were, an expression of opinion of the Great Ones that the accepted candidate has attained a certain requisite degree of Liberation from Karma, but cannot be a **guarantee,** since Initiates, no less than ordinary mortals, have perfect freedom to do whatsoever they will. In fact, lapses are known to have

occurred even among Initiates, Mr. Leadbeater tells us.[1]

But, whether one's aim is to promote the common welfare or to get rid of the "scaffolding"—glancing back at the simile that we had in an earlier chapter[2]—we need have no doubt that all the help and guidance that we need are always ready at hand. Again and again have we been assured by Those Who speak on behalf of the great Brotherhood of Men Made Perfect, Those Who are at once Sons of Man[3] and Sons of God, that guidance and help will never be wanting to those who seek to establish Dharma. Our Lord assures us:

Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. *Luke*, XI, 9.

But what must he seek?

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his (i.e., its) *righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.* *Matthew*, VI, 33.

In a letter from the Brotherhood of Luxor to Colonel Olcott we find the following:

He who seeks us finds us. ***Try.***

[1] *Ibid*, p. 147.

[2] See p. 185.

[3] Our Lord, in using the expression, "Son of Man", of Himself, tells us that He shares human nature with us. But at the same time He is a "Son of God," in the likeness of His heavenly Father.

The same significant word "***Try***" is repeated after each of the next three paragraphs of the letter.[1]

TRY, TRY, TRY. We are told that again and again.

If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . . nothing shall be unpossible to you.

Matthew, XVII, 20.

The task appears formidable when one attempts to envisage the whole of it. But you are not going to do the whole of it now. Or ever. Make a start at any one thing and you will find that the rest follow naturally from it. If, for example, we set out to establish Truth in our life, we find that all the other dharmas are aspects of Truth. All dharmas are facets of the one Dharma; and **any one of them** can be made the central fire seen in all the others as facets. In fact, to cultivate the dharmas independently of each other is to scatter energy and waste it.

As water, when rained down on elevated ground, runs scattered off in the valleys, so he who sees dharmas separate runs to waste after them.

Katha Upanishad, IV, 14.

One must decide for oneself what to concentrate on. Everyone finds something in his nature that needs overhauling, but, when he starts on that, he finds that it dovetails with everything else; so,

[1] *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (*Second Series*), p. 11

in making his job complete on that he finds that he must overhaul his whole nature. But there is always one central dharma to which the others are made subsidiary.

But, whatever we decide to work on and however we decide to set about things, we must never lose sight of the fact that it is on **our own** efforts that success depends.

4. Assiduity and Skill

And so we come to our last requirement: Practical Ability, Skill; that Skill which comes of tireless effort and the soul of which is quickness, dexterity.

We must have this Skill first of all in Discernment itself. The Discernment that comes to one only in the tranquillity and abstraction of deep thought or only after one has allowed oneself to be carried away by Karma will not be found sufficient to give one mastery over it. It must be a **facile** Discernment to constitute the "Wisdom that burns away Karma." Needless to say, such facility is acquired only by practice, by putting Discernment to the test of experience. One who goes on acting without stopping to think will not acquire Discernment; but one who only meditates, but does not act, will have a discernment that is up in air, be full of lofty ideas and fine

utterances, but in the actual conduct of his own life be not a whit the better for all his fine thinking.

We must be practical in our nature, with a disposition to get on with the job instead of wasting time in theorizing and in endless disputation of is and is not. We are pretty sure in any case to go wrong before we come right, and the consequences of making a mistake are far less serious than the dread of committing one. Besides, it is from experience quite as much as—if not more than—from theorizing that one truly learns. On the Path, as everywhere else, nothing succeeds like success: in spite of our best endeavours, the overwhelming weight of Karma prevents us from doing what we see to be right; but once we succeed, success makes success so much easier for the future, partly because of the confidence it gives, and partly because of that ally that it raises up for us, the good-will of the mass-being.

And so Dharma is slowly woven into our character. Character is but a process of integration, a sum of infinitesimals.

Or, it's like a line of telegraph posts. Near the observer the posts are lost in the wide spaces between; but, when one looks further down the line, they are seen to be nearer together; and in the distance they form a compact mass.

The Four Requirements Need Not All Be Satisfied in Perfection

In actual practice the four qualities are not developed to the same degree of perfection. As a rule, one depends, according to one's nature, upon one's possession of one or other of them already developed to a high degree of perfection—the "saviour" referred to in the Mahachohan's letter[1]. For those who are Brahmanas by nature their intellectual acumen is at once the motive force and the instrument for the establishment of Dharma; those who are in essence Vaishyas depend upon their great-heartedness and delicacy of feeling; the Kshattriyas, upon their will power, courage and unshakable faith; and there are those whose strength lies in the Shudraic virtues of practical ability, assiduity, tirelessness, and, above all, readiness and capacity for service.

Karma of the nature of Service is the Shudra karma, born of his own nature.

Bhagavad Gita, XVIII, 44.

Menial service? Yes. Hewing wood, fetching and carrying, cleaning and scrubbing. But not only that. As one progresses in evolution one acquires the capacity for greater service—service as ministers of kings and princes, service of the Masters, service of humanity.

[1] See p. 321.

But, whatever the quality may be that one makes one's stand-by, one must have the other three developed to a certain requisite extent in order to make that one effective as a " saviour."

Let me put this in the form of a simile. Everyone knows that cloth consists of two sets of yarn woven together, the warp and the woof. Although it generally happens that the threads of both are of much the same strength, it may, and often does, happen that one is considerably stronger than the other. But if the latter is disproportionately weak, the cloth is rendered unserviceable.

Now imagine a fabric consisting of **four** elements woven together, conspicuous weakness of **any one** of which would render the whole fabric unserviceable. That fabric is Man, and the four elements are Cognition, Emotion, Volition, Activity. Marked weakness of any one of these is fatal to his usefulness to himself and to others.

There is no doubt about it that there are among the millions in the world at large greater intellects, say, than is displayed by some who, their intellects being their outstanding quality, have entered the portal of Initiation. But, whereas the former have a weak element somewhere, the latter have an all-round development that fits them, relying upon their own intellectual and other resources, to be servants of their fellow creatures.

Whosoever of you will be chiefest shall be the servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. *Mark*, X, 44.

When we have shown by our abilities and by actual work our capacity and readiness, unprompted, unaided, to be "servants of all," shall we be admitted to membership of that august body made up of Those who are servants of all, tirelessly, wholeheartedly, and with all Their great Wisdom and Power.

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