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THE PURPOSE OF THEOSOPHY

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"An Introductory Manual for Beginners" - H.S.Olcott

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THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN

IN order better to comprehend the connection which links the material to what is commonly called the spiritual world, it will be necessary for the reader to know that Eastern philosophy teaches the division of man into seven principles, which are as follows:

1. The Body
2. Vitality
3. Astral Body
4. Animal Soul
5. Human Soul
6. Spiritual Soul
7. Spirit

In this division it will be seen that the body represents a gross form of matter, yet possesses the potentiality of spiritual development which is slowly brought to perfection by a long course of evolution through many incarnations. Yet it must not be supposed that these principles can be separated or torn one from the other like coats of **[Page 2]** skin or that they have distinct and individual

properties that can work independently of one another. Each principle, on the contrary, is closely allied to its neighbour, and can only work when thus supported. The body is of no use unless it is vitalised; the astral body would be, while away from its fleshly case, unintelligent, were it not illumined by the higher faculties of the animal soul, and the higher parts of the human soul itself would, at the death of the human being, cling to the astral form, and with that slowly disintegrate on the astral plane, but for their affinity and close adherence to the spiritual soul.

The three first principles belong exclusively to the personality and are perishable at the death of the body — *i.e.*, the second principle, when no longer occupied with the body, goes to vitalise other organisms in its immediate vicinity, while the astral form decays more slowly but as surely as does the body. The four higher principles form the individuality, the real inner man — the ego that passes from one incarnation to another. If, by a long course of deterioration due to a continued series of births of more and more debasing tendencies, the sixth and seventh principles become eventually detached from the higher portions of the fifth, the latter sinks and is merged in the fourth, which very slowly disintegrates in the astral light, during which time it is one of the **[Page 3]** most dangerous kind of elementaries. The pure spirit which has thus been forced away from the ego flies back to its original source, the universal spirit. These principles are latent not only in animals down to the lowest organisms, but also in all matter, whether organic or inorganic. Thus it may be said that a people contains the potential elements of the perfected man. This, however, does not mean that any particular stone will, in the course of millions of years, be converted into a man, or that, although there is in it undoubtedly the latent germ of the life principle, therefore it will be ever able to move by its own volition. The theory of evolution, which agrees up to a certain point with occult science, maintains that the vegetable kingdom evolves from the mineral, the animal from the vegetable, and so on. It follows, therefore, that in the stone there must be the elements of the vegetable and animal, consequently of man, for it is hardly necessary here to consider the question of a separate creation for the human being.

The higher principles in man are developed in him, one by one, by slow degrees as he works his way up from the lowest form of the savage up to the most advanced types of the present generation. Even in these the higher principles are still only latent. Most people at this present stage of humanity are only in active possession of their fourth principle, although the fifth is beginning to assert **[Page 4]** and manifest itself. This is shown in the development of the material intellect on the material plane, which deals almost entirely with subjects connected with the well-being of this life, — scientific discovery, the education of the masses, historical research, and so on, tending for the most part towards disbelief in any other existence than the one, and consequently to the encouragement of bodily comfort and ease, rather than to the recognition of the spiritual and psychical powers in man, which are just beginning to unfold. When once these faculties are acknowledged the way to their development and training discovered, all other

sciences and studies will sink into relative neglect and become subject to the immense powers of the human will, the education of which will be the highest ambition of all those who have for their aim the attainment of real truth, or in other words, universal knowledge. This, however, will not be until humanity is in full possession of its fifth principle, glorified by the awakening of the sixth.

Even now an educated minority is beginning to be aware that these higher faculties are innate in all and varyingly active in many. The separability in life of the astral from the material body has been proved beyond a doubt. Mesmerism, clairvoyance, magnetism, the passage of matter through matter, mental telegraphy, instantaneous transport of objects from distant places, are facts **[Page 5]** which may be tested and realised to be true by those who are sufficiently interested in these subjects to give the necessary time to such research, and who find themselves, without such proofs, unable to realise a future life or a conscious existence after death.

The exceptional people who are born with, or who become possessed of, the abnormal powers, or spiritual capabilities which bring about the phenomena referred to above, may be roughly divided into two classes, those who from youth upward have been trained in a special manner with a view to the cultivation and expansion of their spiritual and psychical powers, and those who are naturally born seers and mediums, but who have grown up without any intelligent training specially directed to the cultivation of their peculiar gifts.

There is a broad difference between a seer and a medium although the two are connected by certain fundamental resemblances. The former possesses a far higher natural development than the latter, and his powers are his own to wield as he pleases. The medium, as his name implies, is but a passive agent of communication between influences from the subjective or spiritual side of nature and ourselves. The bond of similarity which connects the two consists mainly in the fact that they can both be approached by and have communication with the inhabitants of the **[Page 6]** unseen world around us. Mediums can, under certain conditions, get the physical phenomena with which almost every one is now familiar, but cannot dictate what those conditions are to be, nor ever be quite sure that the results expected and hoped for will be forthcoming. The seer, on the other hand, by the concentration of his mind on a particular subject, can put himself *en rapport* with the spiritual plane, and while in a perfectly conscious and natural state see into the astral light, not only exchanging ideas with the people therein, but also reading with great accuracy the thoughts and intentions of those living in this world. These thoughts are photographed, more or less vividly, in the astral light according to the strength of the will that has projected them. In this way a murder has been distinctly seen by a clairvoyant, in all its details, weeks before it was committed, and the murderer identified by the seer, who recognised him at once and unmistakably from the picture he had seen in the astral light. Events such as this illustrate very clearly the great and lasting effect thoughts may have for good or evil on our fellow-creatures. The steady intention

of murderer to commit a crime, which he carefully plans in all its minutiae, gets pictured in the astral light, and only fades away after a longer or shorter lapse of time, and it may, as long as it remains there, influence other people of evil **[Page 7]** tendencies to the commission of like crimes should they happen to come within reach of this particular current. They would not see the picture as does the clairvoyant, but the evil magnetism therefrom might enter their minds and develop the bad qualities lying dormant there, which otherwise would, perhaps, have never been aroused. The reader may here ask, what is this astral light into which a seer can look, but which to the generality of people is a blank page — a name without a meaning.

The astral light is what in Sanskrit literature, is spoken of as Akasha. It is the store-house from whence the adept obtains, by will-force, the requisites for the working of phenomena of the creative kind. "Akasha is the mysterious fluid termed by scholastic science 'the all-pervading ether'; it enters into all the magical operations of nature, and produces mesmeric, magnetic, and spiritual phenomena . . . The word 'As' Ah, or lah, means *life, existence*, and is evidently the root of the word akâsha, which in Hindustan, is pronounced ahasha, the life-principle, or Divine life-giving fluid or medium. **[Isis Unveiled, Vol. I. page 140]** This excessively attenuated fluid, or medium, which encompasses this world, pervades the universe, and surrounds everything in life, receives and records all our thoughts for a longer or shorter period, according to the intensity and precision with which they **[Page 8]** are conceived. It is in astral light that the slowly disintegrating souls of the dead, called by the teachers of Eastern philosophy, "elementaries" may be seen. It is here, also, that elementals, sub-human beings, and the Deva kingdom must be looked for but until the higher principles of humanity are developed, either in the natural course of time, or by special training now, the astral light and all the secrets of nature therein contained must remain unknown to, and therefore unbelieved by the majority. The ego of man cannot, while it is encased in the body, as at present constituted, take cognizance of things on the spiritual plane, but the study of theosophy, in one of its branches, teaches how to train and subdue the body into such a condition that the spiritual man within may be able to assert his powers, and be in a great measure independent of it.

The invisible world around is infinitely more various and interesting than the one which we know, not because it is unseen, but because it is more real, more lasting, more spiritual, and, above all, because in it is to be found the clue and sequel to so much that is a puzzle and mystery in regard to man's existence on this planet.

In science we are continually being told that such things are "facts", "laws of nature", and can only be accounted for by the vaguest conjectures. All the patient research of our most able men, for years and years past, has brought **[Page 9]** us no nearer to their solution. The attractive and repellant poles of the magnet, the recurrence and regular variations of the tide, and electric action, are "facts"

but how are they accounted for except by theories all more or less unsatisfactory. It must not be supposed, however, that all these problems will be solved at death, nor that the mere power in itself of being able to look into the astral light, or, in other words, being *en rapport*, while in the body, with a different plane of matter, will clear up all the difficulties pertaining to the two states of existence, for assuredly this is not the case. What it is desirable for a student to comprehend is, that a conviction as to the existence of the invisible world and its close connection with the visible is one step in the direction of real knowledge, and the next is a belief in the necessity of these spiritual powers, latent in man, being brought to a high state of development. The process of such development carries with it a comprehensive study of the working of the great law in regard to the phenomena of this world and its inevitable connection with unseen worlds and unseen conditions around us. For then, and then only, can suffering humanity be taught to distinguish between the real and the unreal, to separate the true from the false.

Occultism teaches, and the seer proves, that every one, both old and young, has immediately **[Page 10]** around him an ethereal envelope varying in colour, shape, and general appearance in accordance with his constitution, life, thoughts, and general aspirations. Within this atmosphere may be read the events of his past life, as also those which will happen in the future. It has been said before, that every human being leaves behind him, as he goes through life, a train of circumstances, the actions of which were due to impulses originated in a previous incarnation. These circumstances can be seen in his atmosphere, the aura, itself being only visible in the astral light. Every movement we make, whether of importance or the reverse, must be in answer to a thought. If the movement is one of deep interest, on which much happiness or misery may depend, the mind dwells for a long time upon the subject, and fills in all the details necessary to the success of the project. Consequently, these thoughts get photographed in the astral light, and whether they are thoughts the results of which have been enacted, or whether the events consequent upon them are still to come, the seer can equally well read them, and thus foretell, very often, what will take place after a longer or shorter lapse of time. And, no matter how distant and apparently unconnected with the person whose aura is being examined may be, he who is weaving in his mind the causes which will have such **[Page 11]** a great effect on his path through life, the clairvoyant can follow the subtle magnetic threads which link the two together with unerring skill.

What these magnetic currents, so real for the few who can perceive them, so unreal for mankind at large, are, the reader must discover for himself in the more advanced literature of this philosophy.

It is undoubtedly along these invisible threads that the master of the art of mental telegraphy reads his message; it is also by means of these lines that the mesmerist (unconsciously in this case) influences his sensitive when divided from him by many miles. A lock of hair given to a clairvoyant who is an absolute

stranger to the owner of the hair, and separated by hundreds of miles, will enable him to send his mind along the magnetic currents which subsist between the hair and its natural possessor, so as to take note of what he is doing and what are his surroundings.

Thus it will be seen that Theosophy is not merely an abstract philosophy, dealing with metaphysics and fanciful theories, but that in it the student may surely find in this life the key to the hidden mysteries of nature, as well as the way that leads to spiritual and intellectual progress in the next state of existence.

THE MAHATMAS

It has been already said that there are two classes of exceptionally constituted people who have **[Page 12]** within themselves certain phenomenal faculties, these being roughly defined as the trained and the untrained. The latter group, embracing seers, clairvoyants, and mediums, has been briefly dealt with, and it is now proposed to give the reader some information respecting the former group, that is to say, those who in addition to being born with some or all of the abnormal attributes above enumerated, have from youth upwards gone through a special course of training for the development of their psychical powers. It is commonly assumed that education on the physical plane renders an individual, whether exceptionally talented or the reverse, more capable of systematising his ideas, and more able to use them to advantage for the good of the human race, than if he is left to run wild, gathering his experiences in an unmethodical manner, and from perhaps untrustworthy sources, without proper instruction and assistance by those who have by time and study acquired practical and theoretical information in the well-beaten grooves of scholastic life. This being granted in regard to ordinary education, it is only rational to allow that experienced guidance and instruction is equally if not more necessary in the education of the spiritual faculties. That large numbers are at this moment going through such training and development, and others hoping to do so in the future, is at last recognised by some people in the West, and has **[Page 13]** in the East been an accepted fact from time immemorial.

The result of this psychological training is shown to its full extent in the Brotherhood to which the Mahatmas belong. The true seer or adept is enabled, in consequence of the special training he has gone through, to disembarass his higher principles when engaged in the exercise of their faculties from all connection with the lower. The knowledge thus obtained can only be acquired or perceived in its integrity by these higher principles when they are unpolluted by attachment to the lower, and when approached by the untrained clairvoyant, is misconstrued and mixed up with the fancies and recollections of the physical brain, the functions of which, as an uninstructed psychic he does not know how to render, for the time being, inoperative. The passed adept, when in the state necessary for the reception of this sort of experience, is able to suspend the mechanical action of the brain, his spiritual sight thus becoming clear and

uninfluenced by the admixture of the physical memory. This abstracted state is called in Hindu writings *Samadhi*, and is considered the highest condition of spirituality attainable by humanity while in the body. While on this subject it will be as well to quote again from *Isis Unveiled*: " There are two kinds of seership, that of the soul and that of the spirit. . . . But, as the visions **[Page 14]** of both depend upon the greater or less acuteness of the astral body, they differ very widely from the perfect omniscient spiritual state for, at best, the subject can get but glimpses of truth, through the veil which physical nature interposes. The astral principle, or mind, called by the Hindu Yogin *jivatma*, is the sentient soul, inseparable from our physical brain, which it holds in subjection, and by which it is in its turn equally trammelled. This is the ego, the intellectual life-principle of man, his conscious entity. . . . When the body is in the state of *dhâranâ* — a total catalepsy of the physical frame — the soul of the clairvoyant may liberate itself, and perceive things subjectively. And yet, as the sentient principle of the brain is alive and active, these pictures of the past, present, future will be tintured with the terrestrial perceptions of the objective world; the physical *memory* and *fancy* will be in the way of clear vision. But the seer-adept knows how to suspend the mechanical action of the brain. His visions will be as clear as truth itself, uncoloured and undistorted, whereas the clairvoyant, unable to control the vibrations of the astral waves, will perceive but more or less broken images through the medium of the brain. The seer can never take flickering shadows for realities, ... he receives impressions directly from his spirit. Between his subjective and objective selves there are no obstructive mediums. This is the real spiritual **[Page15]** seership, in which according to an expression of Plato, soul is raised above all inferior good, . . ." **[Isis Unveiled, Vol. II, page 590]**

This psychological education which aspirants for admission into the community of adepts have to undergo is not given in a speculative or tentative manner, but is rather a regular mode of instruction, the rules for which are rigid and absolutely unavoidable, these having been in practice and handed down from one generation to another for thousands of years, since, indeed, humanity first evolved on this globe. The custodians of this school of knowledge are variously called Mahatmas, Rishis, Arhats, Adepts, Guru Devas, Brothers, etc., by their respective followers in different countries or religions, and contain within their number representatives of many nationalities. The majority of them now live in Tibet, although isolated members of the community are to be found elsewhere in far distant countries. They possess a knowledge of the hidden workings of Nature, and of the causes which produce the phenomena of the physical world. This enables them to produce, without other mechanism than their own will-power, phenomena, that upset all the theories that workers in physical science have in the course of many years gradually built up, and are still acting upon. They can defy matter, distance, even death itself. They can create and disintegrate, that is to say, they are to gather the elements out of **[Page 16]** the akasha necessary for the production of material objects and cause them to become visible and tangible, as they can dissipate such objects into their original molecules, which at once diffuse themselves through the astral light and become

invisible to the physical eye. They can take cognizance of people and their thoughts regardless of distance,—impress, influence, and directly communicate with them. What the late Lord Lytton in his *Coming Race*, described as vril power, the Mahatmas undoubtedly possess and can wield. They recognise and practically use for various psychological purposes the different principles spoken of previously as forming the constitution of man, and have in the routine of their training developed their higher principles while at the same time subduing the lower ones to such a state of perfection that the real spiritual man is independent of and altogether master of the material body, and can consequently leave it for long periods of time; the ego belonging thereto in the meantime acquiring real knowledge in other spheres, which on his return to earth goes to strengthen and support the block of such knowledge belonging to the brotherhood.

It is well known in India that fakirs and yogis can by the practice of ascetism and certain physical exercises, such as sitting for a long time together in a particular position, breathing at intervals laid down in accepted rules, etc., attain **[Page 17]** undoubtedly psychological powers, and perform physical phenomena. This kind of training is called Hatha Yoga, while the higher description as taught by true adepts is called Raja Yoga. Between these two modes of education for the attainment of abnormal powers there is an enormous difference, the gap that separates the two, from the lowest form of the one to the highest of the other being filled in by followers of all the many and various religions and sects scattered over the whole of Asia. These include the juggler, who can perhaps practise a humble kind of sorcery for a small remuneration, and the holy man or yogi who lives an ascetic and solitary life, passing his time in meditation and religious practices, harming no one, but, on the contrary, doing good to the extent of bringing home to the uneducated people who visit him the desirability of leading a pure life now, in order that they may attain happiness in the future. But far above the best of these yogis — and that many of them are examples of passive holiness, spirituality, and purity there is no doubt — stand the Mahatmas. For they are the direct inheritors and guardians of the ancient wisdom-religion, and of the accumulated spiritual experience of those who have had charge of the world since humanity appeared thereon. And, when an aspirant to initiation reaches up to and attains adeptship, his further advancement and spiritual education **[Page 18]** is by no means at an end; for in spiritual culture, even more than in mundane, it would seem that the further a student goes, the wider grows the prospect before him. So that members of this venerated community, of which Europeans know so little, not only in their progress gain the personal and recorded wisdom of their contemporaries and predecessors, but they, as it were, test its accuracy as they go on step by step. And this intimacy with the working of the unseen hand that guides the universe — which gives to the adepts their supremacy in all matters relating to physical and other sciences — is acquired by them not as the aim and end of their aspirations, but accrues to them by degrees, while still chelas or neophytes in the line of study organised for their development, and is only a stepping-stone to the more sublime philosophy, acquaintanceship with which helps them to a comprehension of this divine and

immutable law that reigns everywhere, alike both in the visible and invisible worlds around us, equally in things spiritual and physical. For just as it is impossible to find out the exact moment when mineral gives place to a vegetable growth or the vegetable becomes an animal so it is likewise hopelessly difficult to determine the boundary which separates matter from spirit.

The attention of mankind may be, first of all, attracted to this brotherhood, — the members of which have raised themselves to such a tremendous **[Page 19]** height above their fellow-creatures, — by the striking and overwhelming powers with which they are endowed but the student of their doctrine soon comes to regard even these as of inferior interest to the broad and enlightened views of the past and future of humanity, and its relation to and position in the scheme of the universe, to be obtained by their help. Their existence as human beings has been often, and still is, questioned by many; but on the other hand, hundreds of people have not only seen and spoken with them, but some have even lived under the same roof with their own Mahatmas for years together, and naturally during that time have witnessed numberless instances of their powers in various directions. It is not however, the purpose of this little book, as said before, to bring forward proofs of the statements made in it. These the reader can look for, and certainly find, elsewhere. But it may be mentioned, perhaps, in regard to this particular statement as to the existence of the adepts, that the student will find it not only supported in the Sacred Books of the East, which are replete with references to the "Rishis" but also by the verbal assurance of reliable witnesses who have seen and conversed with their own adept-guru, both in the body and also astrally, when separated by thousands of miles.

This separability of the astral from the material body in life is by no means so very uncommon **[Page 20]** even among Western people, who are quite unconnected with Eastern modes of training, and who have no knowledge of the Mahatmas. And it is perfectly well known among certain circles of society that this particular faculty is frequently resorted to by those still in life who wish to visit and communicate with their relatives and friends who have passed away into another state of existence. Moreover, two or more "astrals" will make journey in company, remembering accurately on their return to their respective bodies the conversations they have had with their dead friends, as well as the appearance and leading features of the scenery and country they have traversed in finding these friends. Therefore, if some among us can have such experiences without having gone through a life-long training, or having had any special guidance, why should the existence of the Brothers be doubted because their pupils maintain they get such astral visits from their "masters" when they know that their bodies are hundreds of miles away. Again, if an untrained person finds that he can leave his body at will and traverse the invisible worlds around, bringing back the record of his travels and impressions, how much more possible it is to believe that the adept, who in addition to the natural qualities with which, like the seer, he is at birth in possession of, has been for long years devoting himself to their development, aided **[Page 21]** by the experience and knowledge of those who,

for many generations past, have trodden the same path before him. And why should we find it unreasonable to suppose that these initiates should have within their keeping a transcendental philosophy which has for its foundation, truth and spiritual knowledge. It must be remembered, also, that adeptship is not the result of the work of one life, for the way up to that high point in human evolution cannot be attained in so short a time, even under the most favourable conditions; these conditions belonging to some of the many mysteries that have to be unriddled by a student in his way along the path that leads to a comprehension of occult science.

The first spark of interest in mysticism which gradually unfolds itself in any given individual by reading and study is probably due to some slight contact in a previous birth with people of like tendencies. The reading and theoretical education which he encourages in himself in this life will have its results in his next incarnation, when perhaps he will be strong enough to force himself, by his earnestness, purity of life, and spirituality, on the notice of a master, and eventually become a probationary chela. Once an accepted chela, his progress towards initiation depends upon the mental, physical, moral and intellectual attributes, which he may then develop; and there are many initiations to be passed **[Page 22]** through before adeptship is reached, which we are told is only achieved after a long and weary probation, during which period the man is tried, tested, and proved at every step in his upward course, not only in regard to all bodily desires and feelings, but also in regard to his mental and intellectual qualifications; for to be a Mahatma means to be the embodiment of knowledge, power and justice. It is the goal for which unconsciously humanity is struggling; to which the majority will eventually attain through the long course of trials, experiences and pleasures that all have to undergo in the birth and rebirth of the ego in its many incarnations.

Those who are anxious to shorten the journey to this far-distant haven of rest from earthly existence, can only do so by leaving the high way — which, though comparatively smooth and of easy ascent, is very long — and taking to the mountain paths that lead directly to the top, for those who are at the same time fearless and faithful.

RULES FOR STUDENTS

It may now be advisable to give, for the guidance both of would-be chelas and those who only desire to become theoretical students of this philosophy, some information respecting the kind of life real chelaship entails, and what resemblance it bears **[Page 23]** to the lives led by ordinary people. Chelaship is much less infrequent in India than in almost any other country, and the reason of this lies on the surface, and is accounted for by the fact that belief in and reverence for the Mahatmas may be described as almost hereditary in Hindus. It goes hand in hand with a strong addiction to the study of transcendental

metaphysics. This tendency is not confined to the upper classes of society, but is observable likewise in nearly every Hindu who has sufficient education to raise him above the level of the coolie, or common working man. Even those who in consequence of having received a Western education, call themselves Materialists and argue usually along the lines of Tyndall or Huxley, have, below their English methods of thought, a firm belief in the "supernatural," so-called, combined with an admiring devotion to the sacred literature of their own country. It naturally follows that candidates for occult training present themselves in considerable numbers. Entrance, however, into the channel that will lead to their acceptance as pupils is not so easy as might at first be imagined for the laws and regulations that guard the portals into this path are very stringent, and neither family ties nor worldly duties may be put aside or disregarded. Thus in India, early marriages between children are productive of great trouble in many cases, quite apart from **[Page 24]** the question as looked at socially. A young man whose earnest desire and hope is to become a chela may often find himself hopelessly cut off from following the only career for which he has any inclination by the fact that he has dependent upon him a wife whom he has hardly seen, and duties in life for which he is both unfitted and indisposed.

Let us, however, take a case in which there is no question of a wife, nor any other worldly disability. The aspirant for spiritual knowledge can with the help of a master begin the work before him, the master at first being only required to give him certain advice relative to exercises for the development of his psychical faculties, and to see that in their progress and growth he does not come to grief. For such exercises, taken by one eager to acquire personal development, and persevered in without proper guidance, lay him open to the various influences resident in the unseen world, which unless he is protected by a strong trained will force, are liable to gather round him and produce very dangerous results.

Simultaneously with these mental exercises, the neophyte must confine himself to a simple diet of grain, milk and vegetables, taken only in moderate quantities and at stated intervals. This restraint over his desire to eat and drink one sort of food in preference to another is quite the smallest and humblest commencement of the difficulties that beset the upward life. For he must not only have **[Page 25]** complete control over the emotions consequent on the material pleasures and pains of ordinary life but he must also learn to conquer or rise above mental suffering, he must not only *strive* to become indifferent to mental and physical weaknesses but he must *succeed* in doing so, otherwise there is no hope of his advancement in that particular incarnation. He who sets out with the intention of making occultism the study of his life, and adeptship the goal of that study whether in this or a future incarnation, has to acquire at all events to some extent, the four accomplishments called in Brahminical books the four *Sadkanas*. These accomplishments carry in their attainment complete mastery over all the material desires either of the body or the mind, which pertain to the personality; they also bring in their train spiritual enlightenment which enables the chela to comprehend in some measure, the oneness of the universe and his own

connection therewith. The first accomplishment gives to the neophyte the power to distinguish between the real and the unreal, and to grasp intellectually the fact that every thing connected with corporeal life on this planet is but transitory, therefore, not the *real*. The second is in a measure the result or consequence of the first for the firm conviction of the transient character of this existence once truly established in the pupil's mind, all desire for the pleasures arising from it [Page 26] leave him and he thus acquires the second accomplishment, which is, entire indifference to the results of actions, or to the praise and blame accruing therefrom. He escapes even from the desire for life excepting as a means to the acquisition of spiritual knowledge.

The third accomplishment embraces the six qualifications which are briefly as follows:

1. Mental abstinence, *i.e.*, subjugation of all evil feelings such as envy, hatred, malice, revenge, and the purification of the mind of all worldly anxieties.
2. Bodily abstinence; this, it will be seen, must be the necessary consequence of the first, for as all actions are prompted by thoughts, these latter having been trained to dwell entirely upon spiritual subjects, and with the wish to benefit humanity, it naturally follows that the daily life of the chela will be not only free from all kinds of vice or selfishness, but that his body will, without effort, conform to the ascetic rules laid down as essential to the development of man's physical and spiritual faculties.
3. Freedom from all bigotry, or preference for one form of religion over another, the aspirant being then able to sympathise with and assist all classes equally. He will be, if a Hindu, above caste prejudices, and as desirous of benefiting the Mahomedans as people of what was formerly his own persuasion. [Page 27]
4. Perennial cheerfulness arising from the absence of all pride, having no wish for praise, being without resentment when blamed or wrongly accused, not caring to prove himself right or another person wrong, and the readiness to part with everything he possesses.
5. The attainment of this qualification renders the chela incapable of deviating from the right path, for he has by this time obtained such complete control over the senses and cravings of his body and mind, that the motives that tempt the generality of humanity, in their way through life, to pursue pleasure, ambition, and wealth, at any cost, no longer have any hold over him and he can consequently pass through every sort of temptation without danger of being attracted out of the road that leads to adeptship.
6. A full and perfect belief in his own power of receiving spiritual knowledge, and of the ability of his adept-guru to teach him this science.

The forth and last accomplishment necessary to attain is an ardent longing for spiritual freedom and liberation from conditioned existence.[For fuller and more precise particulars on these four accomplishments, the reader is referred to No. 1 of the "Transactions of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society."]

It will be readily acknowledged that, these accomplishments achieved, the chela will be in an advanced state of spirituality as compared with humanity at large, and that, even if he got no **[Page 28]** further, his condition, morally, would be one of immense superiority as contrasted with the best among us who are held up as patterns of holiness. But, while in his endeavours to purify his lower nature, he has at the same time been acquiring a knowledge of his higher attributes, and has in a measure been enabled to look over, if not to cross, that gulf which, Mr. Herbert Spencer affirms must for ever separate us, as finite beings, from knowledge of the unknowable but only Reality.

The chela has by this time triumphed over the difficulties that surround and beset the way from probationary to accepted chelaship. For a person no sooner gets recognised as a probationary chela, and begins his preparatory studies, than, as a natural consequence of the situation, all the evil qualities and attributes pertaining to his personality spring into view. Propensities of which his friends and probably he himself were not previously aware, now assert themselves, and either develop or are crushed, according to the moral power and strength of will of the person in question. If, after several chances have been given him, he is found unable to resist temptation or to conquer his desires, he is finally rejected by his master as incompetent to take a place in the ranks of accepted chelas. The latter, however, having safely passed this critical period, go on in the way laid down for them each in turn tested and tried in every way that their individual weakness may **[Page 29]** suggest. Sometimes they are found wanting, fail at some of the minor initiations which they have to pass, and get thrown back for a time. In other cases they advance quickly, as their Karma dictates, or, in other words, as their strength of will and ardent desire urge them on to the higher ranks due to the affinities which their former lives attracted round them. At all events, the road up to adeptship is so arduous and difficult that only a very small percentage of those who offer themselves, and are accepted for training, can reach the top in one or even two or three incarnations.

Of those who struggle along as chela all their lives, without attaining complete or more than partial success, many, if not all, see their way to it later on, and in the meantime are so freed from the trammels and necessities of physical existence, that time for them assumes a new aspect, and they can very well afford to wait for the future, conscious of the support and assistance of their revered masters that await them at the all important moment.

If the reader has followed the Theosophic teaching accurately, as thus far sketched out, he will have discovered that the fate of mankind is a long succession of re-births, interspersed with longer or shorter spells of spiritual and

blissful existence, or semi-unconsciousness, in exact proportion as their lives on earth were given to material or higher tendencies. One of the aims **[Page 30]** of the neophyte, in his struggle for adeptship, is then to shorten the number of his incarnations and, by so doing, to get into a state of existence to which, in the ordinary course of evolution, man will not attain but through the lapse, of millions of years; for we are told that the minimum length of time between one incarnation and another for average adult humanity is about one thousand five hundred years.

The chela, by a system of forced or artificial incarnations, foregoes his very large share of heaven, which share has been enormously increased by his exceptionally spiritual life, and thus rapidly gains that status in the universe to which, in the customary flow of human spiritual progress, he would only attain as said previously in millions of years.

The artificial incarnation alluded to will be less difficult to comprehend by those who know or have any experience of the separability of the astral from the physical body before described. Not only can a Mahatma in this way leave his body, but he can also enter the body of one of his chelas, making use of these strange organs almost as if they were his own, the chela's astral in the meantime being absent. Thus the physical body of a chela which is eventually worn out, before the entity is sufficiently advanced for initiation, may with the aid of his adept master be transplanted into another body more fitted to carry **[Page 31]** on the work begun in the previous one. The body chosen for his purpose would be one that in process of nature has lost its vital principle from some one of the many causes due to illness and disease. At the moment of what is commonly spoken of as dissolution, the strange ego takes possession of its new case, and has to conform to its shape, proclivities, etc., moulding these latter by degrees to the necessities of the new situation. The Teshu Lama of Thibet, the head of the occult hierarchy, is always a reincarnation of this sort, the body of a quite young baby being taken for this particular ceremony. The Teshu Lama is, of course, an adept of high standing, and when, as happens in the course of years, his body becomes too frail for further occupation, he reincarnates in the body of a baby. The following account of Captain Turner's interview with an infant Teshu Lama, in 1783, is taken from Mr. Clements Markham's book on Thibet, and may interest the reader as illustrative of this occult practice of immediate reincarnation: —

"On the morning of the 4th of December the British envoy had his audience, and found the princely child, then aged eighteen months, seated on a throne with his father and mother standing on the left hand. Having been informed that although unable to speak he could understand. Captain Turner said, ' that the Governor-General, on receiving the news of his decease in China was **[Page 32]** overwhelmed with grief and sorrow, and continued to lament his absence from the world until the cloud that had overcast the happiness of this nation was dispelled by his reappearance, and then, if possible, a greater degree of joy had taken place than he had experienced grief on receiving the first mournful news . .

. ' The infant looked steadfastly at the British envoy, with the appearance of much attention, and nodded with repeated but slow motions of the head, as though he understood every word. He was silent and sedate, his whole attention was directed to the envoy, and he conducted himself with astonishing dignity and decorum. He was one of the handsomest children Captain Turner had ever seen, and he grew up to be an able and devout ruler, delighting the Thibetans with his presence for many years, and dying at a good old age". [*Tibet*, Bogle and Manning; Introduction, P. lxxiii, by Clements Markham]

The individuality of the Delai Lama, who must be also an adept, is probably carried on in the same way as that of the Teshu Lama. It is hardly probable that these forced incarnations take place in the West, although occasionally cases may be heard of that seem to suggest the possibility. In the East, however, they are by no means of such very uncommon occurrence, as may be ascertained in various ways by the persevering inquirer. Consequently, when it was said above **[Page 33]** that adeptship was seldom if ever accomplished in one life, it was not meant by that statement that the chela was allowed to die in the usual way and bide his time for re-birth in the accustomed manner, taking up his training where he had dropped it some two or three thousand years before, but that he hoped for the chance of carrying on his spiritual progress without any break of continuity.

One of the objects, therefore, that chelas have in view will have now been sufficiently educated, and the fight at first to be made against the claims and selfishness of the body, though difficult, once accomplished, the result is proportionately great.

The next questions to be considered are what the general run of mankind gain by merely a theoretical study of this philosophy, what inducements can lead them to take up new lines of thought, and how, while still living an ordinary life, people may still follow out some of the rules laid down for the guidance of chelas, and with what result on their future. One of the first truths the upward-striving soul has to realise is the temporary character of the body or personality, as compared with the individuality, which is the real and lasting part of the human being. He must also recognise the continuance of the consciousness of the individuality in each successive birth, in spite of the personal memory being absent, and the philosophical necessity for those primary rules of general morality, comprising unselfishness, charity, **[Page 34]** justice, etc., as thought by all religions. A third conception to be grasped is the necessity of a firm belief in the Divine element within us, which may be either encouraged or repressed, according to the means taken for promoting either result. These lessons the ordinary student may try to follow and profit by equally with the chela, certainly with profit to himself in his next birth, and to the immediate advantage of those around him. But a life of unsystematic innocence, no matter how free from actual sin, nor how devotional in spirit, would have comparatively little effect on the evolutionary progress of the entity. Without a certain amount of study towards the comprehension of spiritual

science, there would be no advance for the entity beyond that which all well-intentioned people make unconsciously and by slow degrees forward. These will ensure a certain phase of conscious spiritual life (*i. e.*, spiritual as being free from the material body), dependent upon their various higher attributes, and a reincarnation afterwards exactly suited for the working out of their Karma, more or less laden with happiness or the reverse as dictated by their previous actions. The intellectual study of the esoteric doctrine, therefore, taken quite separately from anything like personal training of the psychical faculties, is an important factor in evolutionary progress. Conducing, as it does, moreover, to a moral and unselfish life, intellectual work in the study of **[Page 35]** esoteric science must stimulate the future spiritual progress of the entity to an enormous extent. Without supposing any extra number of incarnations for the intellectual worker on spiritual lines, the mere fact that his life has been passed in the acquisition of such knowledge should carry with it an exceedingly protracted existence in Devachan (the Tibetan equivalent for Heaven) where, during this time, he will not be simply in a state of blissful but unprogressive happiness, but where he will be continuing, only under much more favourable conditions, the work which was the main interest of his earthly life. This protracted existence in Devachan naturally lands the ego, when his time comes for rebirth, in a period of advanced spirituality, as compared with that of the Earth when he last left it, the progress being due to many thousands of years that have passed since his last incarnation, during which time humanity has been developing the resources of science, as also their own physical faculties. The returning ego does not find itself unprepared for the great difference in the condition of humanity, consequent on its extra long existence in Devachan; but it is quite abreast of, if not still in advance of the stream, without having gone through the many incarnations which have been necessary to the majority of mankind to bring them to this stage of their journey. In this way the study of spiritual philosophy must reduce the ego's number of incarnations, though not on the **[Page 36]** same lines, nor with the same complete success, as the more elaborate training of the chela. The main consideration, therefore for the reader to bear in mind is, that without some distinct and sustained effort in one direction or another, whether over the physical body or in mental work, no exceptional progress can be made by any person in the human procession that is marching on towards that point in the development which the Mahatmas have already reached. Obedience to a moral code, the regular performance of all daily duties, an attitude of uncritical devotion to religious forms and customs, are all very praiseworthy actions, inasmuch as they spring from the dictates of the person's conscience, and are no doubt as examples to the debased and uneducated classes productive of good; but in themselves they will not urge forward the entity out of the beaten track, nor guide it into the channels leading to quicker methods of advancement in the next incarnation. While in such a groove the ego will not retrograde, and thus run the risk of dropping out of the procession altogether, but it will keep in the ranks instead of pushing forward.

Those who cannot by reason of family ties or other occupations enter on the

direct path of chelaship, although with the strong impulse in their natures to do so, may make sure progress by the theoretical study of occultism in all its branches, and this they may without breaking natural bonds **[Page 37]** or without disturbing the comfort of either friends or relations; they may also do this unostentatiously, and yet eventually with the best results. And if their ardent hope is to achieve a regular chelaship sooner or later, let them keep that idea well in mind, acting up, as far as their position in regard to others dependent upon them will allow, to the rules laid down for the guidance of chela. Such persons can always get advice and assistance from those in advance of them in these matters; and, if they should be members of the Theosophical Society, will obtain such help with all the greater facility.

It will, perhaps, be as well to mention here, that in the formation of the Theosophical Society the founders were acting under the direct wishes of certain of the Mahatmas, who thus opened the occult door a little way for those whose intuitions were sufficiently active to guide them to take advantage of this source of knowledge. The society, which in India has spread with extraordinary rapidity, has been of immense service to the natives of that country by arousing in them love and respect for their own ancient literature and philosophy (which through the diffusion of western modes of thought and education, and also in consequence of the apathy constitutional in Hindus, had become almost dormant), thus raising their self-respect and patriotism. Should the Society spread also among the Anglo-Indian community residing in that country, it would prove a bond of union and **[Page 38]** sympathy between the two races that no amount of theoretical legal equality in the government of the mixed population will ever be able to produce.

In the West the Society has had success of a different kind than in the East, and it has given, what is now seen to have been so urgently required, an indication showing in what direction the knowledge and explanation of mystic literature was to be found. It has been already noticed that in the West the proof of the existence of the Mahatmas is not considered satisfactory, and even some members within the society may still remain unconvinced of the fact. Nevertheless, the Mahatmas are its real founders, and in close connection with its nominal leaders. To show the divergent way in which people may look at the same question, it is amusing to find that in India the Hindus had first to be convinced, not of the actual existence of the Mahatmas as living men, for of this they had ample proof, but that the visible founders of the Society were really their agents and in communication with them. This once proved to the satisfaction of the Hindus all went well and there are branches in active working order in almost every town in the three Presidencies of India, while in Ceylon the movement has taken, if possible still firmer root. Owing to the energetic measures started by Colonel Olcott in this island he has, in addition to winning over great numbers of adherents to the Society, **[Page 39]** been the means of organising and bringing into active working order many Buddhist schools where native children can now obtain a good education. Formerly these children had either to be sent to schools

presided over by Christian missionaries, or they had to go without any regular instruction. Those parents who felt they could trust to the home influence counteracting what they considered the dangers to the religious beliefs of their boys and girls arising from such education, sent them, wisely taking the good and rejecting what, from their point of view, was the bad. Others, incapable of seeing anything but the dangers of possible perversion kept their children at home, the result being that thousands of the Singhalese boys and girls were growing up in a state of hopeless ignorance. This evil has now, in a great measure, been removed, and in Ceylon, as in western countries, the children can now go to schools presided over by masters holding the same religious beliefs as their parents.

In Europe the Theosophical movement is not a simple revival of this kind. The views of Nature to which it leads, present themselves at first it is true, amongst us, as new ideas. But even amongst us, when the matter is rightly considered, Theosophy may be regarded as a revival, — a revival, that is to say, of the real esoteric meaning embodied in the great religion of the West as well as in those of the East. Western dogmas [Page 40] have disguised the Esoteric Doctrine very elaborately, but it still runs through them for those who are able to appreciate it. Its outlines may be traced as clearly in Christianity as in the faith of Tibet. For many Theosophists this matters very little. Their interest lies in the study of abstract truth and not in the dissensions that we have given rise to antagonistic theological systems. Still it would be a mistake to imagine that abstract speculation supplies the only method by which the truth can be approached. It can be sought in the analysis of old, as well as in the construction of new creeds, and having regard to the probability that large numbers of educated men and women, whether Christians, Buddhists, Mahommedans, or Brahmins, might find it difficult to give intelligible reasons for preferring their own to rival formulae, the consideration that Theosophy seeks its purpose, — the cultivation of spirituality, — in detecting identities rather than in emphasising contrasts, may perhaps put the movement on friendly terms with many people who might otherwise wrongly imagine themselves bound to offer it their opposition.

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