

Practical Occultism and Occultism Versus the Occult Arts

by H.P. Blavatsky

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Occultism is not magic, though magic is one of its tools.

Occultism is not the acquirement of powers, whether psychic or intellectual, though both are its servants. Neither is occultism the pursuit of happiness, as men understand the word; for the first step is sacrifice, the second, renunciation.

Occultism is the science of life, the art of living - *Lucifer*, Vol. 1, p.7

PRACTICAL OCCULTISM

IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS

As some of the letters in the Correspondence of this month show, there are many people who are looking for practical instruction in Occultism. It becomes necessary, therefore, to state once for all;

(a) The essential difference between theoretical and practical Occultism; or what is generally known as Theosophy on the one hand, and Occult science on the other, and:

(b) The nature of the difficulties involved in the study of the latter.

It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is every ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer — is a Theosophist.

But it is quite another matter to put oneself upon the path which leads to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil; a path which also leads a man to that power through which he can do the good he desires, often without even apparently lifting a finger.

Moreover, there is one important fact with which the student should be made acquainted. Namely, the enormous, almost limitless, responsibility assumed by the teacher for the sake of the pupil. From the Gurus of the East who teach openly or secretly, down to the few Kabalists in Western lands who undertake to teach the rudiments of the Sacred Science to their disciples — those Western Hierophants being often themselves ignorant of the danger they incur — one and all of those “Teachers” are subject to the same inviolable law. From the moment they begin *really* to teach, from the instant they confer *any* power — whether psychic, mental or physical — on their pupils, they take upon themselves *all* the sins of that pupil, in connection with the Occult Sciences, whether of omission or commission, until the moment when initiation makes the pupil a Master and responsible in his turn. There is a weird and mystic religious law, greatly revered and acted upon in the Greek, half-forgotten in the Roman Catholic, and absolutely extinct in the Protestant Church. It dates from the earliest days of Christianity, and has its basis in the law just stated, of which it was a symbol and an expression. This is the dogma of the absolute sacredness of the relation between the god-parents who stand sponsors for a child [So holy is the connection thus formed deemed in the Greek Church, that a marriage between god-parents of the same child is regarded as the worst kind of incest, is considered illegal and is dissolved by law; and this absolute prohibition extends even to the children of one of the sponsors as regards those of the other] These tacitly take upon themselves all the sins of the newly baptized child — (anointed as at the initiation, a mystery truly!) — until the day when the child becomes a responsible unit, knowing good and evil. Thus it is clear why the “Teachers” are so reticent, and why “Chelas” are required to serve a seven years' probation to prove their fitness, and develop the qualities necessary to the security of both Master and pupil.

Occultism is not magic. It is *comparatively* easy to learn the trick of spells and the methods of using the subtler, but still material, forces of physical nature; the powers of the animal soul in man are soon awakened; the forces which his love, his hate, his passion, can call into operation, are readily developed. But this is Black Magic — *Sorcery*. For it is the motive, and *the motive alone*, which makes any exercise of power become black, malignant, or white, beneficent Magic. It is impossible to employ *spiritual* forces if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness remaining in the operator. For, unless the intention is entirely unalloyed, the spiritual will transform itself into the psychic, act on the astral plane, and dire results may be produced by it. The powers and forces of animal nature can equally be used by the selfish and revengeful, as by the unselfish and the all-forgiving; the powers and forces of spirit lend themselves only to the perfectly pure in heart — and this is DIVINE MAGIC.

What are then the conditions required to become a student of the “Divina Sapientia”? For let it be known that no such instruction can possibly be given unless these certain conditions are complied with, and rigorously carried out during the years of study. This is a *sine qua non*. No man can swim unless he enters deep water. No bird can fly unless its wings are grown, and it has space before it and courage to trust itself to the air. A man who will wield a two-edged sword, must be a thorough master of the blunt weapon, if he would not injure himself — or what is worse — others, at the first attempt.

To give an approximate idea of the conditions under which alone the study of Divine Wisdom can be pursued with safety, that is, without danger that Divine will give place to Black Magic, a page is given from the “private rules”, with which every instructor in the East is furnished. The few passages which follow are chosen from a great number and explained in brackets.

1— The place selected for receiving instruction must be a spot calculated not to distract the mind, and filled with “influence-evolving” (magnetic) objects. The five sacred colours gathered in a circle must be there among other things. The place must be free from any malignant influences hanging about in the air.

[The place must be set apart, and used for no other purpose. The five “sacred colours” are the prismatic hues arranged in a certain way, as these colours are very magnetic. By “malignant influences” are meant any disturbances through strifes, quarrels, bad feelings, *etc.*, as these are said to impress themselves immediately on the astral light, *i.e.*, in the atmosphere of the place, and to hang “about in the air”. This first condition seems easy enough to accomplish, yet — on further consideration, it is one of the most difficult ones to obtain.]

2— Before the disciple shall be permitted to study “face to face”, he has to acquire preliminary understanding in a select company of other lay *upasaka* (disciples), the number of whom must be odd.

[“Face to face”, means in this instance a study independent or apart from others, when the disciple gets his instruction *face to face* either with himself (his higher, Divine Self) or — his guru. It is then only that each receives *his due* of information, according to the use he has made of his knowledge. This can happen only toward the end of the cycle of instruction.]

3— Before thou (the teacher) shall impart to thy *Lanoo* (disciple) the good (holy) words of LAMRIN or shall permit him “to make ready” for *Dubjed*, thou shalt take care that his mind is thoroughly purified and at peace with all, especially with *his other Selves*. Otherwise the words of Wisdom and of the good Law shall scatter and be picked up by the winds.

[“Lamrin” is a work of practical instructions, by Tson-kha-pa, in two portions, one for ecclesiastical and exoteric purposes, the other for esoteric use. “To make ready” for *Dubjed*, is to prepare the vessels used for seership, such as mirrors and crystals. The “other selves” refers to the fellow-students. Unless the greatest harmony reigns among the learners, *no* success is possible. It is the teacher who makes the selections according to the magnetic and electric natures of the students, bringing together and adjusting most carefully the positive and the negative elements.]

4— The *upasaka* while studying must take care to be united as the fingers on one hand. Thou shalt impress upon their minds that whatever hurts one should hurt the others; and if the rejoicing of one finds no echo in the breasts of the others, then the required conditions are absent, and it is useless to proceed.

[This can hardly happen if the preliminary choice made was consistent with the magnetic requirements. It is known that chelas otherwise promising and fit for the reception of truth, had to wait for years on account of their temper and the impossibility they felt to put themselves *in tune* with their companions. For —]

5— The co-disciples must be tuned by the guru as the strings of a lute (*vina*), each different from the others, yet each emitting sounds in harmony with all. Collectively they must form a key-board answering

in all its parts to thy lightest touch (the touch of the Master). Thus their minds shall open for the harmonies of Wisdom, to vibrate as knowledge through each and all, resulting in effects pleasing to the presiding gods (tutelary or patron-angels) and useful to the Lanoo. So shall Wisdom be impressed for ever on their hearts and the harmony of the law shall never be broken.

6— Those who desire to acquire the knowledge leading to the *Siddhis* (occult powers) have to renounce all the vanities of life and of the world (here follows enumeration of the Siddhis).

7— None can feel the difference between himself and his fellow-students, such as “I am the wisest”, “I am more holy and pleasing to the teacher, or in my community, than my brother”, etc., — and remain an upasaka. His thoughts must be predominantly fixed upon his heart, chasing therefrom every hostile thought to any living being. It (the heart) must be full of the feeling of its non-separateness from the rest of beings as from all in Nature; otherwise no success can follow.

8— A *Lanoo* (disciple) has to dread external living influence alone (magnetic emanations from living creatures). For this reason, while at one with all, in his *inner nature*, he must take care to separate his outer (external) body from every foreign influence: none must drink out of, or eat in his cup but himself. He must avoid bodily contact (*i.e.*, being touched or touch) with human, as with animal being.

[No pet animals are permitted, and it is forbidden even to touch certain trees and plants. A disciple has to live, so to say, in his own atmosphere in order to individualise it for occult purposes.]

9— The mind must remain blunt to all but the universal truths in nature, lest the “Doctrine of the Heart” should become only the “Doctrine of the Eye” (*i.e.*, empty exoteric ritualism).

10— No animal food of whatever kind, nothing that has life in it, should be taken by the disciple. No wine, no spirits or opium should be used; for these are like the *Lhamayin* (evil spirits), who fasten upon the unwary, they devour the understanding.

[Wine and Spirits are supposed to contain and preserve the bad magnetism of all the men who helped in their fabrication; the meat of each animal, to preserve the psychic characteristics of its kind.]

11— Meditation, abstinence in all, the observation of moral duties, gentle thoughts, good deeds and kind words, as goodwill to all and entire oblivion of Self, are the most efficacious means of obtaining knowledge and preparing for the reception of higher wisdom.

12— It is only by virtue of a strict observance of the foregoing rules that a Lanoo can hope to acquire in good time the Siddhis of the Arhats, the growth which makes him become gradually One with the UNIVERSAL ALL.

These 12 extracts are taken from among some 73 rules, to enumerate which would be useless as they would be meaningless in Europe. But even these few are enough to show the immensity of the difficulties which beset the path of the would-be “Upasaka”, who has been born and bred in Western lands. [Be it remembered that *all* “Chelas”, even lay disciples, are called Upasaka until after their first initiation, when they become Lanoo-Upasaka. To that day, even those who belong to Lamaseries and are *set apart*, are considered as “laymen”].

All Western, and especially English, education is instinct with the principle of emulation and strife; each boy is urged to learn more quickly, to outstrip his companions, and to surpass them in every possible way. What is mis-called “friendly rivalry” is assiduously cultivated, and the same spirit is fostered and strengthened in every detail of life.

With such ideas “educated into” him from his childhood, how can a Western bring himself to feel towards his co-students “as the fingers on one hand”? Those co-students, too, are not of his *own election*, or chosen by himself from personal sympathy and appreciation. They are chosen by his teacher on far other grounds, and he who would be a student must *first* be strong enough to kill out in his heart all feelings of dislike and antipathy to others. How many Westerns are ready even to attempt this in earnest?

And then the details of daily life, the command not to touch even the hand of one's nearest and dearest. How contrary to Western notions of affection and good feeling! How cold and hard it seems. Egotistical too, people would say, to abstain from giving pleasure to others for the sake of one's own development. Well, let those who think so defer till another lifetime the attempt to enter the path in real earnest. But let them not glory in their own fancied unselfishness. For, in reality, it is only the seeming appearances which they allow to deceive them, the conventional notions, based on emotionalism and gush, or so-called courtesy, things of the unreal life, not the dictates of Truth.

But even putting aside these difficulties, which may be considered “external”, though their importance is none the less great, how are students in the West to “attune themselves” to harmony as here required of them? So strong has personality grown in Europe and America, that there is no school of artists even whose members do not hate and are not jealous of each other. “Professional” hatred and envy have become proverbial; men seek each to benefit himself at all costs, and even the so-called courtesies of life are but a hollow mask covering these demons of hatred and jealousy.

In the East the spirit of “non-separateness” is inculcated as steadily from childhood up, as in the West the spirit of rivalry. Personal ambition, personal feelings and desires, are not encouraged to grow so rampant there. When the soil is naturally good, it is cultivated in the right way, and the child grows into a man in whom the habit of subordination of one's lower to one's higher Self is strong and powerful. In the West men think that their own likes and dislikes of other men and things are guiding principles for them to act upon, even when they do not make of them the law of their lives and seek to impose them upon others.

Let those who complain that they have learned little in the Theosophical Society lay to heart the words written in an article in the *Path* for last February:— “The key in each degree is the *aspirant himself*”. It is not “the fear of God” which is “the beginning of Wisdom”, but the knowledge of SELF which is WISDOM ITSELF.

How grand and true appears, thus, to the student of Occultism who has commenced to realise some of the foregoing truths, the answer given by the Delphic Oracle to all who came seeking after Occult Wisdom — words repeated and enforced again and again by the wise Socrates: — MAN KNOW THYSELF.

[Chelaship has nothing *whatever* to do with means of subsistence or anything of the kind, for a man can isolate his mind entirely from his body and its surroundings. Chelaship is a *state of mind*, rather than a life according to hard and fast rules, on the physical plane. This applies especially to the earlier, probationary period, while the rules given in *Lucifer* for April [1889] last pertain properly to a later stage, that of actual occult training and the development of occult powers and insight. These rules indicate, however, the mode of life which ought to be followed by all aspirants *so far as practicable*, since it is the most helpful to them in their aspirations.

It should never be forgotten that Occultism is concerned with the *inner man*, who must be strengthened and freed from the dominion of the physical body and its surroundings, which must become his servants. Hence the *first* and chief necessity of Chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery. There are all-important; while outward observance of fixed rules of life is a matter of secondary moment. - *Lucifer*, Volume 4 , June 1889, Page 348, note .]

OCCULTISM VERSUS THE OCCULT ARTS

I oft have heard, but ne'er believed till now,
There are, who can by potent magic spells
Bend to their crooked purpose Nature's laws

Milton

In this month's "Correspondence" several letters testify to the strong impression produced on some minds by our last month's article, Practical Occultism. Such letters go far to prove and strengthen two logical conclusions.

(a) There are more well-educated and thoughtful men who believe in the existence of Occultism and Magic (the two differing vastly) than the modern materialist dreams of; and —

(b) that most of the believers (comprising many Theosophists) have no definite idea of the nature of Occultism, and confuse it with the Occult sciences in general, the "Black art" included.

Their representations of the powers it confers upon man, and of the means to be used to acquire them, are as varied as they are fanciful. Some imagine that a master in the art, to show the way, is all that is needed to become a Zanoni. Others, that one has but to cross the Canal of Suez and go to India to bloom forth as a Roger Bacon or even a Count St. Germain. Many take for their ideal, Margrave with his

ever-renewing youth, and care little for the soul as the price paid for it. Not a few, mistaking “Witch-of-Endorism”, pure and simple, for Occultism — “through the yawning Earth from Stygian gloom, call up the meager ghosts to walks of light”, and want, on the strength of this feat, to be regarded as full-blown Adepts. “Ceremonial Magic”, according to the rules mockingly laid down by Eliphas Levi, is another imagined *alter ego* of the philosophy of the Arhats of old. In short, the prisms through which Occultism appears, to those innocent of the philosophy, are as multicoloured and varied as human fancy can make them.

Will these candidates to Wisdom and Power feel very indignant if told the plain truth? It is not only useful, but it has now become *necessary* to disabuse most of them, and before it is too late. This truth may be said in a few words: There are not in the West half-a-dozen among the fervent hundreds who call themselves “Occultists” who have even an approximately correct idea of the nature of the science they seek to master. With a few exceptions, they are all on the highway to Sorcery. Let them restore some order in the chaos that reigns in their minds before they protest against this statement. Let them first learn the true relation in which the Occult Sciences stand to Occultism, and the difference between the two, and then feel wrathful if they still think themselves right. Meanwhile, let them learn that Occultism differs from Magic and other secret Sciences as the glorious sun does from a rush-light, as the immutable and immortal Spirit of Man — the reflection of the absolute, causeless and unknowable ALL — differs from the mortal clay — the human body.

In our highly civilised West, where modern languages have been formed, and words coined, in the wake of ideas and thoughts — as happened with every tongue, — the more the latter became materialised in the cold atmosphere of Western selfishness and its incessant chase after the goods of this world, the less was there any need felt for the production of new terms to express that which was tacitly regarded as absolute and exploded “superstition”. Such words could answer only to ideas which a cultured man was scarcely supposed to harbour in his mind. “Magic”, a synonym for jugglery; “Sorcery”, an equivalent for crass ignorance; and “Occultism”, the sorry relic of crack-brained, mediaeval Fire-philosophers, of the Jacob Boehmes and the St. Martins are expressions believed more than amply sufficient to cover the whole field to “thimble-rigging”. They are terms of contempt, and used generally only in reference to the dross and residues of the dark ages and its preceding aeons of paganism. Therefore have we no terms in the English tongue to define and shade the difference between such abnormal powers, or the sciences that lead to the acquisitions of them, with the nicety possible in the Eastern languages — pre-eminently the Sanskrit. What do the words “miracle” and “enchantment” (words identical in meaning after all, as both express the idea of producing wonderful things by *breaking the laws of nature*(!!) as explained by the accepted authorities) convey to the minds of those who hear, or who pronounce them? A Christian — breaking “of the laws of nature” notwithstanding — while believing firmly in the *miracles*, because said to have been produced by God through Moses, will either scout the enchantments performed by Pharaoh's magicians, or attribute them to the devil. It is the latter whom our pious enemies connect with Occultism, while their impious foes, the infidels, laugh at Moses, Magicians, and Occultists, and would blush to give one serious thought to such “superstitions”. This, because there is no term in existence to show the difference; no words to express the lights and shadows, and draw the line of demarcation between the sublime and the true, the absurd and the ridiculous. The latter are the theological interpretations which teach the “breaking of the laws of Nature” by man, God, or devil; the former — the *scientific* “miracles” and enchantments of Moses and the Magicians *in accordance with natural laws*, both having been learned in all the Wisdom of the Sanctuaries, which were the “Royal Societies” of those days — and in true OCCULTISM. This last word is certainly misleading, translated as it stands, from the compound word *Gupta-Vidya*, “Secret Knowledge”. But the knowledge of what? Some of the Sanskrit terms may help us.

There are four (out of the many other) names of the various kinds of Esoteric Knowledge or Sciences given, even in the exoteric Puranas. There is

(1) *Yajna-Vidya* knowledge [The *Yajna*”, says the Brahmans, “exists from eternity, for it proceeded forth from the Supreme One...in whom it lay dormant from 'no beginning.' It is the key to the TRIVIDYA, the thrice sacred science contained in the Rig verses, which teaches the Yagus or sacrificial mysteries. 'The Yajna' exists as an invisible thing at all times; it is like the latent power of electricity in an electrifying machine, requiring only the operation of a suitable apparatus in order to be elicited. It is supposed to extend from the *Ahavaniya* or sacrificial fire to the heavens, forming a bridge or ladder by means of which the sacrificer can communicate with the world of gods and spirits, and even ascend when alive to their abodes”. — Martin Haug's *Aitareya Brahmana*. “This *Yajna* is again one of the forms of the Akasa; and the mystic word calling it unto existence and pronounced mentally by the initiated Priest is the *Lost Word* receiving impulse through WILL POWER”—“Isis Unveiled”, Vol. I, Intr.. See *Aitareya Brahmana* by Haug.] of the occult powers awakened in nature by the performance of certain religious ceremonies and rites. (2) *Mahavidya*, the “great knowledge”, the magic of the Kabalists and of the *Tantrika* worship, often Sorcery of the worst description. (3) *Guhya-Vidya*, knowledge of the mystic powers residing in Sound (Ether), hence in the Mantras (chanted prayers or incantations), and depending on the rhythm and melody used; in other words, a magical performance based on knowledge of the Forces of Nature and their correlation; and (4) ATMA-VIDYA, a term which is translated simply “Knowledge of the Soul”, *true Wisdom* by the Orientalists, but which means far more.

This is the only kind of Occultism that any Theosophist who admires “*Light on the Path*”, and who would be wise and unselfish, ought to strive after. All the rest is some branch of the “Occult Sciences”, *i.e.*, arts based on the knowledge of the ultimate essence of all things in the Kingdoms of Nature — such as minerals, plants and animals — hence of things pertaining to the realm of *material* Nature, however invisible that essence may be, and howsoever much it has hitherto eluded the grasp of Science. Alchemy, Astrology, Occult Physiology, Chiromancy, exist in Nature, and the exact Sciences — perhaps so called, because they are found in this age of paradoxical philosophies the reverse — have already discovered not a few of the secret of the above *arts*. But clairvoyance, symbolised in India as the “Eye of Siva”, called in Japan, “Infinite Vision”, is *not* Hypnotism, the illegitimate son of Mesmerism, and is not to be acquired by such arts. All the others may be mastered and results obtained, whether good, bad, or indifferent; but *Atma-Vidya* sets small value on them. It includes them all and may even use them occasionally, but it does so after purifying them of their dross, for beneficent purposes, and taking care to deprive them of every element of selfish motive. Let us explain: Any man or woman can set himself or herself to study one or all of the above specified “Occult Arts” without any great previous preparation, and even without adopting any too restraining mode of life. One could even dispense with any lofty standard of morality. In the last case, of course, ten to one the student would blossom into a very decent kind of sorcerer, and tumble down headlong into black magic. But what can this matter? The *Voodoos* and the *Dugpas* eat, drink, and are merry over hecatombs of victims of their infernal arts. And so do the amiable gentlemen vivisectionists and the *diploma-ed* “Hypnotisers” of the Faculties of Medicine; the only difference between the two classes being that the *Voodoos* and *Dugpas* are *conscious*, and the Charcot-Richet crew *unconscious* Sorcerers. Thus, since both have to reap the fruits of their labours and achievements in the black art, the Western practitioners should not have the punishment and reputation without the profits and enjoyments they may get therefrom. For we say it again, *hypnotism* and *vivisection* as practiced in such Schools, are *Sorcery* pure and simple, *minus* a knowledge that the *Voodoos* and *Dugpas* enjoy, and which no Charcot-Richet can procure for himself in fifty years of hard study and experimental observation, Let, then, those who will dabble in magic, whether they understand

its nature or not, but who find the rules imposed upon students too hard, and who, therefore, lay Atma-Vidya or Occultism aside — go without it. Let them become magicians by all means, even though they do become *Voodoos* and *Dugpas* for the next ten incarnations.

But the interest of our readers will probably center on those who are invincibly attracted towards the “Occult”, yet who neither realise the true nature of what they aspire towards, nor have they become passion-proof, far less truly unselfish.

How about these unfortunates, we shall be asked, who are thus rent in twain by conflicting forces? For it has been said too often to need repetition, and the fact itself is patent to any observer, that when once the desire for Occultism has really awakened in a man's heart, there remains for him no hope of peace, no place of rest and comfort in all the world. He is driven out into the wild and desolate spaces of life by an ever-gnawing unrest he cannot quell. His heart is too full of passion and selfish desire to permit him to pass the Golden Gate; he cannot find rest or peace in ordinary life. Must he then inevitably fall into sorcery and black magic, and through many incarnations heap up for himself a terrible Karma? Is there no other road for him?

Indeed there is, we answer. Let him aspire to no higher than he feels able to accomplish. Let him not take a burden upon himself too heavy for him to carry. Without ever becoming a “Mahatma”, a Buddha or a Great Saint, let him study the philosophy and the “Science of Soul”, and he can become one of the modest benefactors of humanity, without any “superhuman” powers. *Siddhis* (or the Arhat powers) are only for those who are able to lead the life, to comply with the terrible sacrifices required for such a training, and to comply with them *to the very letter*. Let them know at once and remember always, that *true Occultism* or *Theosophy* is the “Great Renunciation of SELF”, unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. It is ALTRUISM, and it throws him who practises it out of calculation of the ranks of the living altogether. “Not for himself, but for the world, he lives”, as soon as he has pledged himself to the work. Much is forgiven during the first years of probation. But no sooner is he “accepted” than his personality must disappear, and he has to become *a mere beneficent force in Nature*. There are two poles for him after that, two paths, and no midway place of rest. He has either to ascend laboriously, step by step, often through numerous incarnations and *no Devachanic break*, the golden ladder leading to Mahatmaship (the *Arhat* or *Bodhisattva* condition), or — he will let himself slide down the ladder at the first false step, and roll down into *Dugpaship*.

All this is either unknown or left out of sight altogether. Indeed, one who is able to follow the silent evolution of the preliminary aspirations of the candidates often finds strange ideas quietly taking possession of their minds. There are those whose reasoning powers have been so distorted by foreign influences that they imagine that animal passions can be so sublimated and elevated that their fury, force, and fire can, so to speak, be turned inwards; that they can be stored and shut up in one's breast, until their energy is, not expanded, but turned toward higher and more holy purposes: namely, *until their collective and unexpanded strength enables their possessor to enter the true Sanctuary of the Soul* and stand therein in the presence of the *Master* — the HIGHER SELF. For this purpose they will not struggle with their passions nor slay them. They will simply, by a strong effort of will, put down the fierce flames and keep them at bay within their natures, allowing the fire to smoulder under a thin layer of ashes. They submit joyfully to the torture of the Spartan boy who allowed the fox to devour his entrails rather than part with it. Oh, poor blind visionaries!

As well hope that a band of drunken chimney-sweeps, hot and greasy from their work, may be shut up in a Sanctuary hung with pure white linen, and that instead of soiling and turning it by their presence into a heap of dirty shreds, they will become masters in and of the sacred recess, and finally emerge from it as immaculate as that recess. Why not imagine that a dozen of skunks imprisoned in the pure atmosphere of a *Dgon-pa* (a monastery) can issue out of it impregnated with all the perfumes of the incenses used?... Strange aberration of the human mind. Can it be so? Let us argue.

The “Master” in the Sanctuary of our souls is “the Higher Self”— the divine spirit whose consciousness is based upon and derived solely (at any rate during the mortal life of the man in whom it is captive) from the Mind, which we have agreed to call the *Human Soul* (the “Spiritual Soul” being the vehicle of the Spirit). In its turn the former (the *personal* or human soul) is a compound, in its highest form, of spiritual aspirations, volitions, and divine love; and in its lower aspect, of animal desires and terrestrial passions imparted to it by its associations with its vehicle, the seat of all these. It thus stands as a link and a medium between the animal nature of man which its higher reason seeks to subdue, and his divine spiritual nature to which it gravitates, whenever it has the upper hand in its struggle with the *inner animal*. The latter is the instinctual “animal Soul”, and is the hotbed of those passions which, as just shown, are lulled instead of being killed, and locked up in their breasts by some imprudent enthusiasts. Do they still hope to turn thereby the muddy stream of the animal sewer into the crystalline waters of life? And where, on what neutral ground, can they be imprisoned so as not to affect man? The fierce passions of love and lust are still alive, and they are allowed to still remain in the place of their birth — *that same animal soul*; for both the higher and the lower portions of the “Human Soul” or Mind reject such inmates, though they cannot avoid being tainted with them as neighbours. The “Higher Self” or Spirit is as unable to assimilate such feelings as water to get mixed with oil or unclean liquid tallow. It is thus the mind alone — the sole link and medium between the man of earth and the Higher Self — that is the only sufferer, and which is in incessant danger of being dragged down by those passions that may be reawakened at any moment, and perish in the abyss of matter. And how can it ever attune itself to the divine harmony of the highest Principle, when that harmony is destroyed by the mere presence, within the Sanctuary in preparation, of such animal passions? How can harmony prevail and conquer, when the soul is stained and distracted with the turmoil of passions and the terrestrial desire of the bodily senses, or even of the “Astral Man”?

For this “Astral” — the shadowy “double” (in the animal as in man) is not the companion of the *divine Ego* but of the *earthly body*. It is the link between the personal SELF, the lower consciousness of *Manas* and the Body, and is the vehicle of *transitory, not of immortal life*. Like the shadow projected by man, it follows his movements and impulses slavishly and mechanically, and leans therefore to matter without ever ascending to Spirit. It is only when the power of the passions is dead altogether, and when they have been crushed and annihilated in the retort of an unflinching will; when not only all the lusts and longings of the flesh are dead, but also the recognition of the personal Self is killed out and the “Astral” has been reduced in consequence to a cipher, that the Union with the “Higher Self” can take place. Then when the “Astral” reflects only the conquered man, the still living but no more the longing, selfish personality, then the brilliant *Augoeides*, the divine SELF, can vibrate in conscious harmony with both the poles of the human Entity — the man of matter purified, and the ever pure Spiritual Soul — and stand in the presence of MASTER SELF, the Christos of the mystic Gnostic, blended, merged into, and one with IT for ever. [Those who would feel inclined to see three *Egos* in one man will show themselves unable to perceive the metaphysical meaning. Man is a trinity composed of Body, Soul, and Spirit; but *man* is nevertheless *one*, and is surely not his body. It is the latter which is the property, the transitory clothing of the man. The three “Egos” are MAN in his three aspects on the astral, intellectual or psychic, and the Spiritual planes, or states]

How, then, can it be thought possible for a man to enter the “straight gate” of occultism when his daily and hourly thoughts are bound up with worldly things, desires of possession and power, with lust, ambition, and duties which, however honourable, are still of the earth earthy? Even the love for wife and family — the purest as the most unselfish of human affections is a barrier to *real* occultism. For whether we take as an example the holy love of a mother for her child, or that of a husband for his wife, even in these feelings, when analyzed to the very bottom, and thoroughly sifted, there is still *selfishness* in the first, and an *égoïsme à deux* in the second instance. What mother would not sacrifice without a moment's hesitation hundreds and thousands of lives for that of the child of her heart? and what lover or true husband would not break the happiness of every other man and woman around him to satisfy the desire of one whom he loves? This is but natural, we shall be told. Quite so, in the light of the code of human affections; less so, in that of divine universal love. For, while the heart is full of thoughts for a little group of *selves*, near and dear to us, how shall the rest of mankind fare in our souls? What percentage of love and care will there remain to bestow on the “great orphan”? And how shall the “still small voice” make itself heard in a soul entirely occupied with its own privileged tenants? What room is there left for the needs of Humanity *en bloc* to impress themselves upon, or even receive a speedy response? And yet, he who would profit by the wisdom of the universal mind, has to reach it through *the whole of Humanity* without distinction of race, complexion, religion, or social status. It is *altruism*, not *ego-ism* even in its most legal and noble conception, that can lead the unit to merge its little Self in the Universal Selves. It is to *these* needs and to this work that the true disciple of true Occultism has to devote himself if he would obtain *theo-sophy*, divine Wisdom and Knowledge.

The aspirant has to choose absolutely between the life of the world and the life of occultism. It is useless and vain to endeavour to unite the two, for no one can serve two masters and satisfy both. No one can serve his body and the higher Soul, and do his family duty and his universal duty, without depriving either one or the other of its rights; for he will either lend his ear to the “still small voice” and fail to hear the cries of his little ones, or, he will listen but to the wants of the latter and remain deaf to the voice of Humanity. It would be a ceaseless, a maddening struggle for almost any married man, who would pursue *true practical Occultism*, instead of its *theoretical* philosophy. For he would find himself ever hesitating between the voice of the impersonal divine love of Humanity, and that of the personal, terrestrial love. And this could only lead him to fail in one or the other, or perhaps in both his duties. Worse than this. For, *whoever indulges, after having pledged himself to OCCULTISM, in the gratification of a terrestrial love or lust*, must feel an almost immediate result — that of being irresistibly dragged from the impersonal divine state down to the lower plane of matter. Sensual, or even mental, self-gratification involves the immediate loss of the powers of spiritual discernment; the voice of the MASTER can no longer be distinguished from that of one's passions, *or even that of a Dugpa*; the right from wrong; sound morality from mere casuistry. The Dead Sea fruit assumes the most glorious mystic appearance, only to turn to ashes on the lips, and to gall in the heart, resulting in:

Depth ever deepening, darkness darkening still;
Folly for wisdom, guilt for innocence;
Anguish for rapture, and for hope despair.

And once being mistaken and having acted on their mistakes, most men shrink from realizing their error, and thus descend deeper and deeper into the mire. And, although it is the intention that decides primarily whether *white or black magic* is exercised, yet the results even of involuntary, unconscious sorcery cannot fail to be productive of bad Karma. Enough has been said to show that *sorcery is any kind of evil influence exercised upon other persons, who suffer, or make other persons suffer, in consequence.*

Karma is a heavy stone splashed in the quiet waters of Life; and it must produce ever widening circles or ripples, carried wider and wider, almost *ad infinitum*. Such causes produced have to call forth effects and these are evidenced in the just laws of Retribution.

Much of this may be avoided if people will only abstain from rushing into practices neither the nature nor importance of which they understand. No one is expected to carry a burden beyond his strength and powers. There are “natural born magicians”; Mystics and Occultists by birth, and by right of direct inheritance from a series of incarnations and aeons of suffering and failures. These are passion-proof, so to say. No fires of earthly origin can fan into a flame any of their senses or desires; no human voice can find response in their souls, except the great cry of Humanity. These only may be certain of success. But they can be met only far and wide, and they pass through the narrow gates of Occultism because they carry no personal luggage of human transitory sentiments along with them. They have got rid of the feeling of the lower personality, paralyzed thereby the “astral” animal, and the golden, but narrow gate is thrown open before them. Not so with those who have to carry yet for several incarnations the burden of sins committed in previous lives, and even in their present existence. For such, unless they proceed with great caution, the golden gate of Wisdom may get transformed into the wide gate and the broad way “that leadeth unto destruction”, and therefore “many be they that enter in thereby”. This is the Gate of the Occult arts, practised for selfish motives and in the absence of the restraining and beneficent influence of ATMA-VIDYA. We are in the Kali Yuga and its fatal influence is a thousandfold more powerful in the West than it is in the East; hence the easy preys made by the Powers of the Age of Darkness in this cyclic struggle, and the many delusions under which the world is now labouring. One of these is the relative facility with which men fancy they can get at the “Gate” and cross the threshold of Occultism without any great sacrifice. It is the dream of most Theosophists, one inspired by desire for Power and personal selfishness, and it is not such feelings that can ever lead them to the coveted goal. For, as well said by one believed to have sacrificed himself for Humanity — “strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life eternal”, and therefore “few be they that find it”. [Matt. viii, 14] So straight indeed, that at the bare mention of some of the preliminary difficulties the affrighted Western candidates turn back and retreat with a shudder....

Let them stop here and attempt no more in their great weakness. For, if while turning their backs on the narrow gate, they are dragged by their desire for the Occult one step in the direction of the broad and more inviting gates of that golden mystery which glitters in the light of illusion, woe to them! It can lead only to Dugpa-ship, and they will be sure to find themselves very soon landed on that *Via Fatale* of the *Inferno*, over whose portal Dante read the words:

Per me si va nella citta dolente
Per me si va nell' eterno dolore
Per me si va tra la perduta gente....