

Esoteric Buddhism

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" There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial."

A FEW years ago no one in Europe had any knowledge of the stupendous achievements of our Aryan ancestors in science and philosophy. Recently, however, the hereditary guardians of Eastern wisdom, the followers of the Rishis of old, have disclosed a large part of their secret knowledge, of which the following is a brief outline.

While Western science has come to the conclusion that man is modified matter and mind a mode of motion, these profound philosophers have discovered that a perfect human being is composed of seven powers or principles, which they arrange thus:—

1. The Body, of chemical elements.
2. Vitality, which distinguishes organic matter.
3. Astral Body, an ethereal counterpart of the body.
4. Animal Soul, or body of will and desire.
5. Human Soul, or seat of memory and reason.
6. Spiritual Soul, or Divine essence.
7. Spirit,

The three lower principles are altogether of the earth, and are absolutely done with by man at death. The fourth and fifth form in us the terrestrial personality, and are illuminated by the higher principles, which are the emanations of the Divine soul, and, therefore, omniscient.

From one point of view, the object of evolution is to unite the personality with the spiritual soul, thus making man a divine being; this uniting with the sixth principle makes a man a true adept, or Mahâtma.

In the animal, the consciousness is concentrated in the fourth principle.

The evolution of such a complex being as man is destined to become does not take place on the earth alone, but is extended through a chain of seven planets, each of which has a special part to play in the development of humanity. It will readily be supposed that the planets which form this chain are not

exactly similar in constitution; in reality, they are very unlike each other, not merely in outward conditions, but in that supreme characteristic, the proportion between their spiritual and material characteristics. On the earth the balance between these characteristics is even; the other planets in the chain are more ethereal. In the solar system there are six other planetary chains, not connected, however, with the planetary system to which we belong. Round the seven planets of the chain the individual entities circle, and return again to the planet on which they began their existence, not, however, to resume the condition they left millions of years previously. On the second visit to the first planet the entities have reached the second stage, or round, of their existence. Esoteric philosophy recognizes seven kingdoms of nature, each of which seems to take seven rounds, or passages, around the planetary chain for its complete development

The three lowest kingdoms are called the elemental or astral kingdoms; the fourth is the mineral kingdom; the fifth, the vegetable; the sixth, animal; the seventh, man. To the last we must confine our attention.

Man, it appears, has to pass seven times round the complete chain of seven planets; in other words, the complete evolution of humanity requires seven rounds. We are in the fourth round. The individual entity does not, however, only pay a flying visit to each planet and then pass on to the next. On each planet there are seven great races of humanity which successively rise, flourish, and decline; that is, there are seven culminations of development and civilization on each planet in turn. Each of these seven great races is further divided into seven branch races, and each branch race into seven root races. In each of these root races every individual entity, or monad, has to pass at least two incarnations, or earth lives; so that there are about 800 incarnations for each individual on each planet in turn. The majority of mankind now living belong to the fifth great race — the brown-white section of mankind. The Asiatic Aryans belong to the first branch race, while we, the European Aryans, belong to [Page 16] the fifth branch race of the fifth great race. The fourth great race, whose pure descendants are found among the inland Chinamen, inhabited a continent called, by Plato, Atlantis, which is now submerged, but indications of which were discovered, it is believed, by the soundings of the "Challenger". The predecessors of the Greeks and Romans were Atlantians. The fourth great race is the red-yellow branch of mankind. The third race inhabited a now submerged continent in the Indian Ocean, which we may call Lemuria. Their degenerate descendants are the flat-headed aborigines of Australia.

After each incarnation of the individual comes a period in which he is rewarded according to his deserts in an ethereal world, his sojourn in which may last from 2,000 to 10,000 years, according to the quality of spiritual energy developed by the higher nature of the individual. This ethereal world has many phases; its extreme phases are called Devachan and Avitchi; corresponding roughly to the ideas of heaven and hell, but differing from these ideas in that they refer to a state not to a locality. To Avitchi, however, go only the aristocrats in crime, characters who may be compared morally to Milton's Satan. The rest of mankind, the "sinners rather commonplace", suffer for their sins in the next incarnations; since, according to the law of "Karma" or merit, each incarnation is the exact result, the sum total of the attractions for good and evil, of the preceding incarnations. This doctrine of Karma, the true meaning of the saying "Whatsoever a man sows, the same shall he also reap", and the keystone of Aryan ethics is the point of contact between esoteric philosophy and the life of every human being. The life of each individual is the result of the actions of our last incarnation, and our next incarnation will be the result of our actions in the present life.

The state of Devachan is a condition of spiritual refreshment, the fruition of all the divine and spiritual aspirations of the highest part of our nature. It has been described as "a rosy sleep, with dreams more vivid than day, and lasting for many centuries"; the individual enjoyer of Devachan is not alone but is attended by the celestial counterparts of his earthly friends, who remain with him, as happy, blissful, and innocent as the disembodied himself. Each man's Devachan or heaven is as joyful and enjoyable as his highest faculties and aspirations can make it.

After a brief period of unconsciousness, immediately succeeding the separation of the soul from the body, there is a dawn into the Devachan state, a full day of bliss lasting many centuries, an evening of semi-consciousness, followed by oblivion and renewed incarnation.

The fourth principle, the body of Will and Desire, which is the vehicle of the adept who chooses to leave his body temporarily, is separated from the higher principles during the unconscious period after death, and may sometimes be seen floating about near the body, when it is taken for the [Page 17] ghost of the deceased person. Sometimes a personality is so gross and sensual that it has no spiritual attractions to carry it into the Devachan condition; the body of personal wishes then separates from the higher principles, and becomes dissipated.

The personalities are like beads strung on the individuality or true eternal self, which passes through all the incarnation unchanged. In the case of the extinction of a personality, the bead is broken off the individuality and destroyed.

In the first round, or passage round the seven members of the planetary chain, man is a relatively ethereal being, compared with his present earthly condition, not intellectual but semi-spiritual; spirituality in the Esoteric sense being the capacity for direct or intuitive knowledge, as opposed to physical reason or knowledge acquired by logical processes. During the first round, man, like the vegetable and animal shapes around him, inhabits an immense but loosely-organised body. In the second round he is still gigantic and ethereal, but growing firmer and more condensed in body, a more physical man, but still less intellectual than intuitive. In the third round he has developed a perfectly compact body, at first the form rather of a giant ape than a true man, but with intelligence coming more into the ascendant.

In the fourth, the present round, he decreases in size, and his intellect, now greatly developed, achieves enormous progress. The races with which the fourth round begins acquire human speech, as we understand it. In the fifth round the personality is to be merged in the spiritual soul, and this union ensures final salvation.

In the sixth round humanity attains a hardly conceivable perfection of body and mind, of soul and spirit. The most transcendental enlightenment which the world has ever known or conceived will form the common type of manhood. Those faculties which now, in the rare efflorescence of a generation, enable some extraordinarily-gifted persons to explore the mysteries of nature and acquire the knowledge, a minute portion of which is now being offered to the world, the faculties of the highest adeptship, will be the common possession of all. Mankind in the seventh round will be altogether too god-like for mankind in the fourth round to forecast its attributes. For the sixth and seventh rounds it is absolutely necessary for man to possess the faculty of direct spiritual perception — supreme intuition. In other words, man, to

continue his existence through the higher rounds, must merge his personality in the higher principles, which are the key to the spiritual planes. By this union he comes to full remembrance of all his former lives, this complete memory of the past being the Esoteric meaning of resurrection.

Virtue in any decided degree must finally engender the spiritual attributes which the adept acquires in a comparatively brief period, [Page 18] the adept being comparable to a fifth round man; he has merged himself in his higher principles, and is assured of final salvation. Those who fail to engender the necessary spirituality have to do so in a future planetary period.

After the last and most glorious of all incarnations, in the end of the seventh round, those who have reached that state pass into Nirvana, a sublime state of conscious rest in omniscience, they become planetary spirits, the guardians and guides of the next planetary period.

An incarnation of planetary spirits takes place at the beginning of each race, when the broad ideas of right and wrong are impressed on the earliest members of that race, and the germ of the Esoteric wisdom is instilled into a few chosen souls, who become its custodians and transmitters to future races. This is the mystery of the Divine Incarnation; and it is the appearance of a Divine Being at the beginning of a round which impresses indelibly on humanity the idea of an anthropomorphic God, who incarnates to teach mankind the way of righteousness, the path of salvation.

Such is a brief sketch of a portion of the Esoteric doctrine taught by the spiritual heirs of the pupils of the incarnated planetary spirit.