

Cremation Considered From the Point of View of the Religions of the East

by Franz Hartmann, M.D.

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, —

In thanking you most heartily for the opportunity offered me of addressing you on the religious views which form the basis of cremation in India, I must beg of you to permit me to preface the same by a few personal remarks. It happens that the subjects on which I purpose addressing you must appear to most of you quite new and strange, because they refer to facts on which very little light has been thrown as yet in Europe. They refer to mysteries of religions which the Buddhists and Brahmins do not very willingly surrender to publicity, and which, also, are somewhat difficult to understand by the uninitiated. Nevertheless, I shall endeavour to elucidate my subject as clearly as is possible in a short address. I would further beg of you not to think that I intend propagating a new religion. I merely give the results of my own observation, and each one is at liberty to think what he likes about it. There may be possibly some among you who think that the religious views of the Hindus are based only on superstition. Others, again, may have come to the conclusion that these views are founded on the deeper penetration of Indian methods into the secrets of Nature. I do not undertake to give any judgment in this matter. I leave to every one perfect freedom to believe what he thinks right.

The foundations on which the religions of the East are based are still very little known to our Orientalists and philologists. These investigators are, as a rule, occupied with researches into the origin of certain words, or with historical events and other extraneous matters, but certainly not with [Page 2] inquiries respecting Eternal Truth, which is only approachable by spiritual perception. One may have spent one's whole life in India without becoming acquainted with its religious mysteries, just as one may be for long years a diligent church-goer without acquiring a knowledge of the true nature of Christianity. And I also should not have been able to tell you anything about these things had I not joined an association which includes many Brahmins, Buddhists, and others, who enabled me to become better acquainted with the nature of these religions, not only on the surface, but also with the truth which forms their basis.

With regard to Cremation, I must confess that I have hitherto felt an interest in it only so far as its sanitary aspect must attract the attention of a medical man. It is as much a matter of indifference to me whether my body is to be burned or buried after death as what will happen to my cast-off coat. I have also never considered whether I ought to be burned or buried, and if any such expression were used it would be incorrect and a wrong mode of speaking, because that which is the real man can neither be burned or buried. That which is interred is only the earthly body, and *one ought not to identify oneself with that even*

in idea. Our children who still feel and think naturally, whose nature is not yet spoiled by sophistry, speak more correctly. They say, *e.g.*, "Mamma, Charles is hungry", or "Papa, Mary wants to go to sleep," instead of "I am hungry", etc. In doing so they are right, because the true "I" of man, which (alas!) but few of us know, is not hungry, nor does he want to go to sleep, but he is rather a god raised high above everything that is perishable or transitory. The sages of the East use the same mode of speaking as our children. They say, *e.g.*, "My nature wants this or that; my body feels; my mind thinks", etc. The mysterious "I" always remains hidden in the background.

If we investigate more precisely what man really is, we shall find he is made up of many "I's", *i.e.*, of many forms of consciousness, which are continually changing, and that he is always that "I," *i.e.*, that form of consciousness with which he at the time identifies himself. We shall return later on to these different "I's" or forms of consciousness, which, to speak with Goethe, make up "that little world which thinks itself the whole", when we consider the real constitution of man, according to the Indian doctrine; we shall then find that that "I" of man which is perishable by fire, may stand even after death in a certain connection with that "I" which is imperishable.

To speak first of my own experience, I must say that, although I have never paid much attention to modes of interment, I have, while on my travels, had frequent opportunities of observing them. For instance, nearly thirty years ago I went as ship's doctor to America, lived in different parts [Page 3] of the United States and Mexico; then travelled through California, Japan, China, and India, and witnessed in these countries, as well as in Ceylon, on many occasions, the ceremony of burying the dead. As well as I remember, one of the first bodies cremated in America was that of the Baron de Palm, which Colonel Olcott had publicly burned, after keeping it concealed for a whole year in his cellar in a barrel of chloride of lime. It is noticeable that in America, although a free country, and not subject to guardianship by Government, reforms are not easily inaugurated. There is there, the same as here, a public opinion which is led by men of letters, clergymen and others, and, as elsewhere, the ground must first be prepared before a new seed or a new idea can take root and be developed. There, as here, a strong opposition was raised. Part of the clergy maintained that cremation was not permissible, as it prevented the resurrection of the body at the last judgment; others again, more enlightened Theologians, contradicted this by explaining that this resurrection must take place in a living body, not in a decayed one, and that what is meant by this is the spiritual interpenetration of the whole living body by the soul, illumined by the Divine Light. To this must be added that in America there is no State Church protected by the Government, but instead there are about 360 sects, who all differ in opinion and are in mutual conflict. The Church was therefore unable to support its prohibition by force.

The lawyers and doctors maintained, as they do here, that in cases of death by poison, Cremation would render subsequent inquiry impossible as proof of a possible crime. On the other hand, it was well said it were better that once in a way a death by poison should remain unproved than that hundreds of thousands of human beings should lose their lives by an atmosphere made deadly by corpses, or by drinking water poisoned by graves. It could be as readily objected that the body of a man who had died at sea should not be entrusted to the waves, but that it should remain and infect the whole ship, in order that hereafter the possibility should not be interfered with of proving that the patient died in accordance with natural causes.

This view found its support in the fact that the poisoning of towns by churchyards in America was a not infrequent occurrence. It often happens, on account of the quick growth of American towns, a cemetery

which has been laid out at some distance, within a few years comes to be situated in the central part of the town. So, for example, in New Orleans, in Louisiana, there are several large cemeteries in the centre of the town. As water is found there within two feet of the surface, the bodies are not interred there, but entombed above the surface, where they poison the atmosphere instead of the water. We see by this that we should purchase, by the prohibition of Cremation, a very small advantage at the price [Page 4] of a very great disadvantage. But that the poisoning of the air and of drinking-water by the interment of the dead is no picture of the imagination, we find amply proved in the East.

When you come to Madras or any other town in India where there are many Mahommedans, who, as is well known, bury their dead, you find that such a town consists, so to speak, of houses and cemeteries. Here a house, there graves; then again a few houses, then more graves, just because the graves of Mahommedans are always dug in the nearest possible vicinity to the houses. Scattered between them are wells; and you can easily believe that the water from these is of such a non-vegetarian character that it is impossible to drink it unless filtered through charcoal. But the poor have no filters, so there are outbreaks of cholera and other diseases, which then spread over Europe.

I had the honour of becoming acquainted, in the course of a journey from Ceylon to Madras, with Dr. Koch, who discovered that cholera is caused by a bacillus. If the same pains had been taken *to discover and prevent the general causes which permit the bacillus to originate, it would perhaps have been less useful to science, but far more useful to humanity.*

Cremation is universal with the Hindus, and in every town are to be found special places for that purpose. As one meets here in our streets hearses, so one meets there carriers, who are bearing on a litter the dead body unveiled to the cremation place. On arriving there it is laid on a pyre, melted butter (ghee) poured over it, and then burned amid certain ceremonials. Amongst the rich the pyre consists of sandal and other aromatic woods, the ceremonial is magnificent, and the whole proceeding is very costly. Amongst the poor little trouble is taken, and such a Cremation costs only about two rupees. In Burmah each body is placed separately in an old flour barrel, covered with straw and such like material, and is then burned.

In addition to these various modes of disposing of the dead, I will describe that of the Parsees. These allow the body to be taken by birds or dogs. When you go to Bombay you must not neglect to visit the "Towers of Silence". These are the cemeteries of the Parsees. A great tower-like building is provided with a roof which slopes inwards towards the centre of the tower, where there is a deep pit. The bodies are laid upon the roof, and immediately a swarm of carrion vultures, which are constantly on the watch for the arrival of a corpse, swoop down upon it, and devour it within a very few minutes. The well-picked bones then roll down the roof and fall into this deep pit. The idea which underlies this mode of interment is that our Mother — the element earth — should be sacred to us, and that we should not desecrate her with anything that is dead. Besides this, by this mode of interment the component particles [Page 5] which form the human body are quickly incorporated in other living organisms.

Besides Cremation, there obtained in India not long ago the rite of suttee, *i.e.*, the burning of the living widows together with the corpse of the husband, a custom which has now ceased by the intervention of the English. The religious idea which was the foundation of this burning of widows originated in the fact that it is said in the Indian Sacred Scriptures, if husband and wife are united in fire, one hundred

thousand years in Swarga (a state of the highest bliss) shall be the result. This sentence in the Vedas was taken quite literally, and produced as its effect this burning of widows. But in reality it has quite a different and much deeper meaning, namely, if we understand "husband" as the male principle, the *thought*, and "wife" as the female principle, the *will*, there is produced by the union of both in the fire of love, that *spiritual perception* the natural effect of which is a state of high and enduring bliss. It is this that is meant by the Indian Sacred Scriptures, which, like our Bible, speak in allegories. This secret interpretation was unknown to the ordinary priests as well as to the laymen, who were incapable of such high comprehension.

As with us a merely dead letter and superficial interpretation of certain biblical passages led to the Inquisition and the burning of witches, so also in India a false interpretation of the Vedas led to various abuses. Amongst these the best known is perhaps the formerly universal evil custom of Jaggernath, namely, on certain days a colossal car, with monstrous wheels, was drawn through the streets by elephants. The populace crowded round to see a supposed dwarf (Jaggernath) contained in the car. During this many were crowded under the wheels and lost their lives, through which they were supposed to acquire eternal bliss. Then, at last, it became the custom that the most believing ones threw themselves under the wheels, and, like so many Christian saints, sought voluntarily the martyr's death. That which lies at the foundation of this religious aberration is as follows: — By the car of Jaggernath is to be understood the human constitution, in the innermost depths of which the Divine Spirit dwells in secret. Whoever recognises this Divine Spirit in himself thereby acquires the Divine Self-consciousness and Conscious Immortality. For this purpose of course it is useless to allow himself to be crushed by an elephant car, just as a Christian martyr does not become either more intelligent or more reasonable for being flayed alive.

It would be easy for me to cite other and varied instances of this kind to show what an amount of evil a false interpretation of Sacred Scriptures can produce. Here in Europe it is customary for us to laugh at this kind of thing, and yet we need not go far to find similar instances. [Page 6] Also with us the Bible is interpreted superficially, and falsely expounded by both learned and laity, and the true meaning is not grasped. Nowadays there are probably only a few who believe that Adam and Eve in Paradise stole ordinary apples, such as are to be bought here in the fruit market.

It is assumed that this allegory represents how primeval man, who was a high and divine being, plucked the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by beginning to think and will for himself, and thereby losing his purely spiritual perception. It was strongly objected to me by learned Brahmins that there are still many more passages in the Bible which are wrongly read by us. For example it says, "Whosoever would follow me must leave father and mother and all things". Now the Brahmins say that this means that we must leave our own prejudices and opinions, which in a certain sense are our own spiritual parents, and also all sinful inclinations, if we would arrive at the knowledge of Eternal Truth. Nevertheless there have been cases where persons have run away from their earthly parents to enter a cloister, and expected that God would reward them for it.

It says, for example, that a camel can sooner pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter into heaven. The Brahmins say that that means that he who is rich in opinions and illusions of his own, to which his heart clings, cannot reach that state of contentment and blessedness which is the result of the true knowledge of God in his own heart. But there have been persons (though they have become rarer now in consequence of widespread disbelief) who read the passage superficially, and who gave their

possessions to the Church without reflecting that if this superficial reading were the correct one, the *rich* Church would be the very last that could enter into heaven.

A case is known to me in which a man in Illinois attempted to imitate the example of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son, because he believed that God also in this case would intervene at the last moment. Had this man first consulted the Brahmins, they would have told him that by Abraham must be understood the universal man, and by Isaac, the self-will, and that when Abraham is prepared to resign his own will completely to the will of God, then God still permitted him to retain his own will, which by this sacrifice had become of a divine nature. But the man referred to above took the passage literally, and as no Divine Being appeared to stop his hand, he actually did slay his son, for which he soon found himself, not in prison, but in a lunatic asylum.

We will not pursue these comparisons any farther. But I would still like to mention that the burning alive of widows was not carried out by force as frequently believed, and that the widow was not cast into the fire against her will, They submitted voluntarily to be burned, and even [Page 7] now, although it has been abrogated, many wives still become victims to suicide at the death of their husbands, not from grief, but from religious conviction. To this should be added that a widow is exposed to the contempt of the rabble, because Hindus and Buddhists are all adherents to the doctrines of Re-incarnation and Karma. In other words, they believe that the personality of man is only a transitory phenomenon, and that sooner or later after death the spiritual force which dwells within him will again call into being another personality (*i.e.*, will re-incarnate), the life of which will have a certain connection with the previous personality. They believe, further, that everything is subject to the Karmic law of Divine Justice, so that when the first personality has led a vicious life, the second personality, possessing a spiritual individuality identical with the first, has to suffer for it. The doctrine of Re-incarnation or Re-embodiment of the spirit in human bodies, and the doctrine of Karma or Divine Justice, of the truth of which about 400 millions of dwellers on this earth are convinced, are too elevated to be fully represented in a short address. To speak briefly, they are based on the idea that the *character* of a thing is the essential, and the *form* in which it presents itself to us is only an appearance.

It is this distinguishing of the true essence from its outward appearance which differentiates the scientific and religious systems of the sages of the East from those of the West. According to certain views of the West, man is a developed ape. According to the views of the Indian sages, which also coincide with those of the philosophers of past ages and with the teachings of the Christian mystics, man is a god, who is united during his earthly life, through his own carnal tendencies, to an animal (his animal nature). The God who dwells within him endows man with wisdom. The animal endows him with force. After death *the god effects his own release from the man* by departing from the animal body. As man carries within him this divine consciousness, it is his task to battle with his animal inclinations, and to raise himself above them, by the help of the divine principle, a task which the animal cannot achieve, and which therefore is not demanded of it.

When I speak of the "religions of the East", I mean by that the broad foundations on which all those religions rest, although there may be in different systems various deviations. We are not concerned with investigating how far the separate religious sects of the East differ from one another. When we know the basis which is common to them all, we have, as it were, a bird's-eye view of the whole, and we shall then perceive that Christianity also rests on the same foundation, because there exists only one sole universal and Eternal Truth, and whatever is true in any religion has its root in this. [Page 8]

The word "Religion" is derived from "religere", and represents the perception of the relation borne by man to his spiritual origin; in other words, religion is the knowledge of the true nature of man and his position in the universe. To study this kind of religion it is necessary to free ourselves from all customary conceptions of that which is called "matter" and to conceive the whole world as merely a mode of manipulation, comparable to a picture that is produced on a wall by a magic lantern, and which disappears again as soon as the light in the lantern is extinguished. We can look upon the world if we choose, with Schopenhauer, who has grasped the Indian doctrine, as a product of will and representation, or, better still, with Jacob Boehme, as the emanation of the Divine Universal Will, the effect of which is Representation. We can also express this in other words, as when we say, *Brahm* (God) is All in All. As the pictures of a magic lantern exist by means of its light, so do the material things of which this world of appearances consists originate from the Divine force which dwells within them.

Man also is included in these forms of appearance. According to the Indian doctrine the visible body of man is but a very small part of the real being of man, which is invisible to the outer senses, and may be compared to a nebula in the heavens, which extends over millions of miles, but of which only the innermost shining spot is clearly discernible.

In accordance with these views the world is a universal consciousness, that expresses itself in the most diverse ways in minerals, plants, animals, men, gods, and other beings, and which produces forms corresponding to the character of these beings. Man also is such a form of consciousness. In his thoughts and feelings a continual change of forms of consciousness takes place, a constant swaying to and fro between the higher and the lower. At one time the expanse of his emotional nature is agitated by passions, which again is succeeded by a period of rest. These forms of consciousness produce the various "I's" of man, of which I spoke at the commencement. For man is that which he feels and thinks, and with his feelings and thoughts changes also his form of consciousness, his outward "I." One can, therefore, become also, without re-incarnation, "quite a different person". Only the true, the divine "I", of which most men know nothing, is immortal and eternal.

Hindus and Buddhists, and also the Christian Mystics, divide these forms of consciousness which constitute man into different groups, which I will here refer to cursorily, because, as you will see, Cremation stands in a certain relation to them. I regret that, as my time is limited, I can only convey to you the general fundamental laws of these divisions.

The highest form of consciousness is the Divine *Atma*, or that which [Page 9] we know as God or Christ in man, a form of consciousness which only those possess in whom the divine life has been awakened — those, in other words, who are *true* Christians, even though they adhere in their outward opinions to the Hindus, Jewish, Mahommedan, or other system, or to no system at all.

You will all easily conceive that the Divine Spirit or *Atma* cannot reveal itself in its perfection in an animal soul. The higher spiritual perception in which the divine in man (Jesus in man) reveals itself is called by the Buddhists "*Buddhi*". It is also taught in Christian doctrine, that no one can go to the Father except through the Son; this means (the Hindus maintain) that man must first have come to divine consciousness (to Christ) before he can conceive the Deity in his true grandeur.

Opposed to this spiritual soul of man is an animal consciousness, or "*Kama-rupa*" (the form produced by the desire for earthly existence), in which the passions and sensual inclinations reside, and which every man feels within himself, although the dissecting knife has not as yet demonstrated this scientifically.

Between "*Atma-Buddhi*" and "*Kama-rupa*" comes the proper human consciousness called by the Buddhists "*Manas*". It is that called "Mind" in English, and in German (incorrectly) the human soul. This is the seat of true human thought and will, and of the intellectual faculties which are contained in it, like the seed grain in a field. It is the "*Manas*", but not the Divine Spirit, which is constantly influenced by the higher and lower, and in reference to which Goethe says in Faust: —

" Du bist dir nur des einen Triebs bewusst;
O lerne nie den andern (den niedern) kennen.
Zwei Seden wohnen, ach ! in meiner Brust,
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;
Die eine halt in derber Liebeslust
Sich an die Welt, mit klammernden Organen,
Die and're hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen."

The lowest form of consciousness is the animal body. As, according to Hindu doctrine, everything in the world is the expression of the Universal Will, and as a particular consciousness resides in every kind of will, so the body of man can also be nothing else than a certain form of consciousness; but that it has a consciousness of its own, and differing from that of *Manas*, is shown by the reflex movements, e.g. in epilepsy, where the mind loses its control over the muscles. This body of man, which is the outward expression of the inner man and the object of our anthropology, is the only part of the grand constitution of Man that is [Page 10] accessible to exact scientific investigation, for as exact (*i.e.*, outward) science can only make use of outward means, so it can also only occupy itself with outward things, perceptible by the senses. For a deeper knowledge, an awakening of the inner spiritual senses would be required, *i.e.*, a higher spiritual development.

It is this exterior animal body which is burnt, during Cremation, after it has lost by death its consciousness and sensation, and which should be destroyed as soon as possible, so that it should not be a cause of danger to the living through chemical decomposition.

But between the physical body, which is the seat of the principle of life, and the intellectual principle of man (the *Manas*), there is another thing, viz., "The astral body", described by Theophrastus Paracelsus, Cornelius Agrippa, and many other mystics, and which is called by the Hindus "*Linga Sarira*". This astral is a very peculiar thing, and has very extraordinary qualities. It is the exact counterpart of the exterior body, and its consciousness can reveal itself independently of that of the outward body. It is known to some of us as the "Double", and it is the mysterious cause, as yet unexplained by science, of innumerable visions of ghosts and mystical experiences. In a healthy man this astral body is closely and inseparably united to the exterior body. During many forms of illness and other abnormal states its connection with the outward body may, however, become loosened, and such persons then believe that they see their own spirit, or become mediums, so called. It is not at all rare that during severe illness a patient complains that besides him there is another person in the bed, but who really is also himself. To speak briefly, a dividing of consciousness takes place here, which reveals itself as two forms.

It would take us long before we could conclude, if we wished to more particularly enumerate all the qualities which are ascribed to these astral bodies by the Hindus. It will suffice to say for the purpose we have in view today that this body, viewed from an outer standpoint, is a semi-material thing which is intimately connected with the exterior body, and which also does not separate from it after death, so long as a trace of the latter still remains.

The Hindu teaches this when the man dies, *i.e.*, when Atma-Buddhi-Manas departs from the body, he leaves behind two corpses, viz., the quite dead physical; body, and the astral body, which can be, according to circumstances, quite unconscious, semi-conscious, or even fully self-conscious.

The astral body has namely, like all the other principles which form the constitution of man, its own form of consciousness, which develops during life, according to circumstances, in one direction or another. [Page 11] In a man, *e.g.*, who, during life, strives only for the noble, the elevated and the spiritual, the consciousness of the astral body (which comprises the merely animal and non-intelligent principle) will only be slight. On the contrary, in another, who yields himself up wholly to the passions, hate, etc., this consciousness of the astral body, which, so to speak, becomes concentrated in him, can persist for a very long time, even when the body is already decomposing. Such a man becomes after death (so say the Indian sages) a "Bhut", *i.e.* a devil, or ghost. He has then no reason by which he can exercise self-control (as this belongs to the higher principles, which have already departed from him), he acts according to his impulse and his nature. It is not my intention to dilate on many marvellous tales of vampires, etc., which are laid to the charge of these God-forsaken Astral men; I will only remark that the most terrible thing a Hindu can represent to himself is, to become after death a " Bhut" One can, if one likes, explain away all these things as superstition. But I have known persons who were "clairvoyant", and who maintained that they saw in cemeteries floating forms of corpses buried there, and that this sight was so loathsome that, if everyone had the gift of the inner sight, Cremation would soon become universal, as cemeteries would not be endured any longer.

To liberate this astral body from the corpse and to lead it to its dissolution into the elements of which it is composed, is one of the aims of the Hindus in Cremation.

I have chanced to look today into Goethe's "Faust", and the following lines bearing on the above met my eye: —

"Man kann auf gar nichts mehr vertrauln;
 Sonst mit tern letzten Athemzage fuhr sie aug
 Tich passt ihr auf, und wie die schnellste Maus,
 Schrapts hielt ich sie in festverschlossnen Klauen.
 Nun zaudert sie und will den d, stern Oet,
 Des schlechten Leichnams ekles Haus nicht lassen;
 Die Elemente, die sie hassen,
 Die Reiben sie am Ende schmählich fort."

It is just this that Cremation accomplishes; that which decomposition only slowly brings about, fire, as the most powerful of all elements, achieves very quickly.

Evidently the "soul" of which Mephistopheles speaks refers to the astral body and to the animal element, "Nephesch", united to it, because the divine in man, "Ruach", cannot be carried off by the devil; only that which is evil becomes the prey of the evil principles. But that the astral body is something material, but nevertheless pervades the whole physical body, is nothing particularly remarkable, because we are well aware that, [Page 12] e.g., silver is also something very material, but nevertheless pervades, when it is dissolved in union with nitric acid in water, the whole material liquid likewise. And as, by the addition of a little table salt, the silver again separates and becomes visible as chloride of silver, so also a Separation or manifestation of the astral body can take place, under various abnormal conditions, in the constitution of man.

The greatest of all German philosophers, Jacob Boehme, from whose writings most of our later philosophers have taken their ideas, compares the astral life to fire — the soul is flame, the spirit is light. Wood is a visible body. Now when light has disappeared with the flame, the wood or the charcoal can still glow for a time, and likewise the fire of passion or desire can, when the spiritual soul has fled, still maintain for a moderate time the lower forms of will in a sort of phantom life.

In conclusion I beg to observe that, according to Hindu doctrine, death is but a change of form. That which is of a divine nature, *i.e.*, immortal, separates from the impure and mortal, and each part continues its own development. That the whole man is not immortal is shown by the simple view of a corpse. But if man has something immortal in him, and if there is something divine in man, then, as God is immortal, the divine in man must also be immortal. But if man is not aware of this divine in him, his immortality will be of as little use to him as it would be to anyone to possess a million of money without having any knowledge of the fact. But whoever finds the divine in himself finds also with it his own immortality, and knows it, and does not require further proof that he is really immortal. Proofs are only necessary for that which one does not perceive. That which is perceived needs no other proof than it is known.

We are assembled here in the Hall of the "Scientific Club", and above me is inscribed "Knowledge is Power". This is perfectly true. Real knowledge gives power outwardly and inwardly. But all is not real knowledge that one is accustomed to regard as such. Much that nowadays is looked upon as science is composed of opinions, which in future will give place to other opinions, as they in their turn took the place of old opinions that were previously looked upon as science. All that we have arrived at by merely logical conclusion, but have not discerned by our own actual perception, I would denote as simply *negative* knowledge, without on that account denying it a certain value. When I say, e.g., three times three are nine, and therefore six times six are equal to thirty-six, I mean by that, that according to the reason given, and the rules of arithmetic, six times six can be nothing else than thirty-six. But that does not by any means say that I know what thirty-six really is, for to know this, I should have first to know what the number *one* is in its real nature. But when I put the question thus, reason comes to a standstill, [Page 13] and can get no farther. It is a question that can only be answered by the inner feeling or intuition.

To learn to know this *One*, *i.e.*, God, is the highest science and art. When we have learnt to know the number *one* in us, then we can also follow up easily all numbers which develop from it. In this perception of the one consists the perception of God in man, *i.e.*, *the self-consciousness of the truth in us*.

The purpose of life is to attain to this self-consciousness of truth; from death we expect no other gain than liberation from false appearance. Cremation is the most elevated visible sign and symbol of this

emancipation; for as the useless dead body is consumed by fire, and thereby returns again to its mother Nature, so also does the selfishness of man perish in the fire of Divine love, and in the flame of true knowledge the Divine Spirit returns to its primeval origin, the Source of Light.