

## Heaven and Hell

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[Page 3] THE last time I had the honour of opening the discussion for the Lodge, it fell to my lot to endeavour to trace the septenary nature of consciousness in man as in the universe; and curiously enough our subject for this evening will also resolve itself into terms of consciousness, as I think we shall find, when we come to enquire briefly into the nature and origin of the two poles or aspects of consciousness commonly termed heaven and hell.

In elucidating the subject, I propose to first examine a few of the various meanings attached to these terms in the exoteric books of ancient religions, before coming to more modern times, and finally to Madame Blavatsky's own teachings on the states called heaven and hell; teachings which show, I think, at least one very vital point of difference from anything definite that can be found in the recorded utterances of other and older teachers who have preceded her, although it often seems hinted at; only the key is needed, and then the reading between the lines shines out clear and unmistakable.

First, then, let us turn back to the ancient Scriptures of India, the "sacred books of the East" (how ancient we can scarcely realize); we therein find Manu enumerating twenty-one hells, or places of torture to which the souls of the wicked were sent, *Naraka* being the term used for hell; and observe, in passing, that we have in the number twenty-one a multiple of that ever-present and mysterious factor, the number seven. The Vishnu Purâna, in which the word Pâtâla stands for hell, gives seven hells, with their respective names and inhabitants; but as these names vary in different authorities, to give any detailed catalogue of them would merely result in confusion, the Sanskrit terms being as a rule somewhat stiff and unfamiliar to Western ears. It will, however, prove interesting to notice one or two points, especially in the enumeration of the seven infernal regions and their respective rulers, as given in the *Padma Purâna*; for instance, the first hell is said to be subject to *Mahâ-Mâyâ*, which literally translated means "great illusion", or delusion; from "Mahâ", great, and "*Mâyâ*", illusion. [Page 4] Surely this, if it has any meaning, is a term of consciousness; and we find *Mâyâ*, again, given as the ruler of the fourth hell, thus carrying on the idea that these hells are probably intended to symbolize states of consciousness resulting from illusion.

In the *Shiva Purâna* eight hells are given, and we are told that "the sage Narada paid a visit to these regions, and on his return to the skies gave a most glowing account of them, declaring them to be far more delightful than Indra's heaven, and abounding with every kind of luxury and sensual gratification". [Dowson's *Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, etc.*] This, I venture to think, scarcely conveys the idea of a place of punishment, torture, or torment.

Another term much used in these classifications is the word *Loka*, which appears to stand variously for a

division of the universe, a world, or a place merely. In general the *Tri-loka*, or three worlds, are heaven, earth, and hell; and this division seems more nearly to resemble (or prefigure) the modern idea of heaven, purgatory, and hell; a triple division. Again another classification gives seven *Lokas* — exclusive of the infernal regions, which are also given as seven in number and classed under *Pâtâla* — and in a description of the inhabitants of the seven Upper Worlds, or *Lokas*, we find the fifth to be the abode of Brahmâ's sons, Sanaka, Sananda, and Sanat-Kumâra. [Students of the Secret Doctrine will be interested in comparing what is there stated to be, the, real meaning and functions of these sons of Brahmâ — and also of the sage Narada — with the exoteric accounts of them to be found in the *Purânas*] The seventh or highest *Loka* is described as the abode of Brahma himself, and translation to this world exempts beings from further birth, which in Theosophical phraseology would mean that the Nirvanees inhabit this region, those who when offered the "Great Choice" elect selfish bliss and "entire oblivion of the world of men for ever", [*Voice of the Silence*, H.P. Blavatsky] rather than selfless and unceasing toil for struggling Humanity.

The Sâmkhya and Vedânta schools of philosophy recognize, I believe, eight *Lokas*, or regions of material existence; which recall the allusions to the mysterious eighth sphere in Mr. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*.

We will now pass without present further comment to an examination of the conceptions held on this subject by the ancient Egyptians, who also taught a threefold division of the other worlds: — *Amenti*, or *Hades*; *Karr*, or Hell; and *Elysium*, or Heaven. *Amenti* with them signified "the Dark", "the Secret Place", "the Land of no return", "the House with no exit"; to quote the words of a translation made by [Page 5] Lepsius from a papyrus: — "The Amenti is a land of heavy sleep and darkness; a house of grief for those who stay there; they sleep in incorruptible forms, they walk not to see their brethren, they no more recognize father and mother, their hearts have no more feeling towards their wife and children. This is the dwelling of a god named *All-Dead*; he calls everybody to him, and all have to submit trembling before his anger. Great and little are the same to him. Each trembles to pray to him, for he hears not. Nobody can praise him, for he pays no regard to those who adore him. He notices no offering that any may bring to him". [Bonwick's *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*] What a terribly graphic picture these words of an ancient record bring before our minds of the inevitableness, the silence, the almost despair, of the dwelling-place of the god named *All-Dead*. This sort of Amenti is, however, more after the character of the Jewish *Sheol* (to which I shall presently refer), a region of stillness and inactivity. Other accounts give the active side, in which it is recognized as being simply the continuation of this life after death. As Bonwick says: — "The departed were not, as with us moderns, something removed out of sight, to be mourned over awhile, and then almost forgotten, as not being of us. . . . Hades, the Amenti, was only the other side of the river, it was near at hand. . . . Upon removal from this earth the man at once enters upon a fresh series of mental conflicts" (note the term, *mental* conflicts). "He is confronted by dangers, and tortured by demons: the whole story is one of trial. The Ritual [of the *Book of the Dead*] lays down the procedure most clearly. There must be suffering for expiation of guilt. There must be tests to bring out the character". And here I would suggest that if the framers of the Ritual had nothing more in their minds than states or places *after death*, it surely seems strange that these tests *to bring out the character* should, be kept for a *post-mortem* condition; and — inferentially, at least — not imposed during earth-life.

*Elysium*, or heaven, the Egyptians termed "the kingdom of the blessed"; and there was a gate by which souls ascended to it from Hades, called *Ammah*. This *Elysium* is described as a condition of the most perfect bliss and happiness, where dwell the souls of the blessed; not apparently, however, in the repose of idleness, for Lenormant makes the following interesting observations on the sixth chapter of the *Ritual*

*of the Dead* (which bears upon the state of *Elysium*): — "It is there that we learn that *knowledge* is as necessary as virtue to obtain the happy destination of the human soul; and the work of the soul, it may be in this life, it may be in the other, it, ought to accomplish, in [Page 6] order to acquire knowledge, has for its symbol the exercise of agriculture. Knowledge is food for the soul, as barley for the nourishment of the body. One obtains barley only by sowing grain in the earth, and in reaping while it is ripe the new harvest produced by the seed. It is by a series of similar operations that the soul must pass to procure knowledge, *the condition of happiness*".

The Egyptian hell, or *Karr*, consisted of ten halls, or fourteen abodes, and was in no want of flames; indeed I must confess that until I came to look this subject up, I really had no idea how much similarity there is between the traditional hell of the middle ages, with all its accompanying crude horrors, horned devils with pitchforks, various instruments of torture, etc., and the Egyptian hell; the resemblance is almost absurdly accurate, even to minor details. In the Egyptian hell it was that the god Ra was to be seen as "Lord of the Furnace", and a record of the eighteenth dynasty says of some one, "He shall be miserable in the heat of infernal fires"; while there are perfectly awful pictures drawn of devils thrusting bad Egyptians into hell. Another record describes the place as "the bottomless pit" and "the lake of fire", terms doubtless sufficiently familiar to many of us who have received the orthodox Christian education! Devils, too, figure largely in the scene, "they move about with instruments of torture, bastinadoing, cutting, burning, boiling, beating, or tearing hearts and tongues out" — truly infernal employments, which sufficiently and graphically foreshadow similar performances recorded of the infamous Torquemada and his myrmidons.

It is significant to find allusions even to final annihilation, to which Mariette Bey refers when he says: "For these a second death, that is to say a definitive annihilation, is reserved". Indeed annihilation appears to furnish the subject of many prayers, e.g., "Let me not be annihilated"; and Lenormant asserts that the wicked "before being annihilated, are condemned to suffer a thousand tortures, and, under the form of an evil spirit, to return here and disturb men, and exert themselves for their injury", adding that "annihilation of being was held by the Egyptians as being the punishment reserved for the wicked". Recent Theosophic teaching on this terrible doctrine of final annihilation will here furnish the needed clue, the state described being of course that in which the Higher Ego breaks off from the hopelessly debased-lower personality entirely, and that man becomes a *soulless being*. Than this I cannot conceive of any more terrible form of annihilation — *absolute* annihilation from the point of view of the Higher. [Page 7]

I have been unable to collect very much information as to the Babylonian tenets on heaven and hell; the god Hea and his wife were said to preside over their Hades, as Osiris and Isis did over the Egyptian. The *Bit-edie*, or "House of Eternity", as it was called, had seven spheres, realized in their seven stages of towers which showed, or rather exemplified, the seven stages of progressive existence in Hades. From this idea of progression we may infer, I think, that *post-mortem* states were not looked upon as in any sense *final*.

The Zoroastrian, and its later form the Mazdean religion, next claims notice, which very distinctly teaches that it is only in heaven and hell that the righteous and the wicked will have their recompense and their punishment. The adventures of the soul after death form the favourite subject of the descriptions of the Mazdean — or Mazdayasnian — literature, and may be found in the *Avesta*. Immediately after death the soul, separated from, though still near, its former tenement the body, lives over again in review all the past actions of its life; this apparently continues for three days, on the fourth it is said to "quit its place".

[*The Philosophy of the Mazdayasnian Religion under the Sassanids*, translated from the French of L.C. Casartelli.] in the act of doing which it sees advancing towards it an embodiment of its good thoughts, words, and deeds, if the past life has been that of a good man, or of its evil ones, if that of a bad man. The interview, which is described at some length, between the soul and, so to say, its own creation takes place close to the bridge of *Chinvat*, called "The Bridge of the Soul"; here the good and evil of the soul's past life are weighed in the balance for judgment, upon the character of the past life depending the soul's easy or difficult passage over this bridge. The souls whose sins exceed their good deeds are said to go to hell, while those whose good deeds predominate go to heaven. This heaven is described as surrounding "the whole creation, just as the egg surrounds the bird"; it is of a triple nature, and above it again is the supreme heaven, dwelling of God and of the good spirits. Hell is also said to be triple, and there are three primary hells and a yet deeper place, from whence groans and cries come up from tormented souls; and although the souls are figured as standing as close to each other "as the ear is to the eye, " yet each soul thinks, "I am quite alone" — a most graphic touch.

These hells are not represented as being eternal, but as to be finally destroyed, for Praise be to Him, "cry out the faithful, "who makes the final retribution . . . . and who will *at the end* deliver the wicked from hell, and restore the whole creation to purity. [Page 8]

I think we may fairly gather from much of the foregoing, that scarcely one idea on this subject appearing in the teachings of modern religions can be said to be actually new; the older philosophies are found to contain them all, of course under varying forms, suited to their surroundings, and the state of civilization of the times in which they flourished.

Turning next to the teachings of Confucius, we find in his canonical works — the *Yé-King*, I believe, is the one — that *Tien*, or heaven, is spoken of in the same terms as the Supreme Being, as pervading the universe and awarding moral retribution; sometimes, however, the term is applied to the visible sky only. Heaven and earth, it is said, produced man, but the work was incomplete, men were to be taught the principles of reason, which heaven and earth could not do. The work of the sages was equally great, so therefore heaven, earth, and the sages form a triad of powers equal among themselves. In fact, the Chinese division of human knowledge is into heaven, earth, and man.

This, read in the light of the *Secret Doctrine*, is most explicit, especially when it is added that Confucius taught virtue to be rewarded and vice punished in the individuals, or in their posterity, *on earth*; which, by the way, would be a most unjust proceeding if this word posterity be not here taken to mean themselves, reincarnated. Very little definite teaching is given of any *post-mortem* states, hence the charge of materialism often brought against the teachings of Confucius.

Sir John Davis, writing on China in 1857, says that the hell of the Chinese Buddhists may be very well described from a translation — made by Dr. Morrison — of the explanatory letterpress of ten large woodcuts which are exhibited in the temples on certain occasions. According to this account, "Prior to their final condemnation the souls are exposed to judgment in the courts of *She-ming-wâng* ('the ten kings of darkness'). The proceedings in these courts are represented exactly after the manner of the Chinese judicial trials, with the difference in punishments, which in these pictures of the infernal regions are of course sufficiently appalling. In one view are seen the judge with his attendants and officers of the court, to whom the merciful goddess *Kwân-yin* appears, in order to save from punishment a soul that is

condemned to be pounded in a mortar. (!) Other punishments consist of sawing asunder, tying to a burning pillar of brass, etc.; liars have their tongues cut out; thieves and robbers are cast upon a hill of knives, and so on. After the trials are over, the more eminently good ascend to Paradise; the middling class return to earth to other bodies, to enjoy riches and honour; while the wicked are [Page 9] tormented in hell, or transformed into various animals whose dispositions and habits they imitated during their past lives". [*China*, etc, by Sir John Francis Davis. 2 Vols. 1857] All which inevitably suggests the idea that hell and earth life may have been considered as synonymous.

The Greek conceptions of *post-mortem* states must be sufficiently familiar to you, as also the fact that it is their Hades, or "place of the departed", which has been rendered "hell" in many passages in our translation of the *New Testament*. Indeed, I would refer you to an article in the *Nineteenth Century* for October last, on "Ancient Beliefs in a Future State", in which Mr. Gladstone enters very fully into the ideas held by the Greeks on this subject. It is easier, however, to show that the Greeks had definite conceptions of heaven and hell than it is to prove that the Jews possessed any. Their word translated hell comes, I believe, from a root meaning "to hide", so that the original sense would be "the hidden or secret place"; it serves as the translation of the two words *Sheol* and *Gehenna*; the latter, I am told, being the Greek form of the Hebrew *Gehinnom*, the valley of Hinnom, the dark gorge on the west side of Jerusalem, where was the furnace (Topheth) through which children were passed "through the fire to Moloch," and in which persons convicted of aggravated wilful murder were put to death. Hence it was synonymous with "a place of torment" — "hell fire," in fact. [Matt. v. 22]

*Sheol* is rendered, in several passages in the *Old Testament*, [Genesis xlii, 38, and xlv 31. *I Kings* ii 9, Job xvii, 13 and 19. Psalms xlix, 15 and lxxxix, 46, Isaiah xiv, 9 and 11.] in the sense of the invisible state of the dead, "the place and state of those who are hidden, or sought after". As a place beyond the tomb it is distinguished from *Queber*, which is the burial place of the body. That *Sheol* was not looked upon by the Jews as an exactly desirable place may be inferred from the passage where the Psalmist exultantly sings: "Thou didst not leave my soul in hell". Any conception that the Jews may have had of a pleasurable state after death was of a purely material character, a place in which the soul was delighted by gardens and orchards, similar to Eden, but which they called *Paradis*. [Nehemiah ii, 8 and Eccles. ii. 5] This name has, however, no Hebrew root, so we may conclude that the idea was borrowed from some older religion, probably the Persian or Assyrian. The only heaven — *Shemmin* — of which they had formed any idea was that expanse which divided "the waters from the waters" (*Genesis* i. 6 and 7), and to which the Psalmist refers in the passage, [Page 10] "Praise the Lord, O ye heavens, and ye waters that are above the heavens". The word firmament — *Rakio* — in the Hebrew is evidently intended to refer to a solid expanse capable of supporting waters or seas above it. It had gates, and stars in it, as well as the sun and moon, and its movements were supposed to carry these bodies along; it was further supposed to have three planes, or divisions, by which it may be presumed that they accounted for the different motions of the sun, moon, and stars. But this evidently could not have been a place for departed souls.

The Mohammedan ideas on the states after death are, if possible, still more material. From Sale's translation of the *Korân*, I find that Mohammed taught an intermediate state both of soul and body, as also of a heaven and hell; but the descriptions given are really so ludicrous that it is quite impossible to quote at any length from them, suffice it to say that the crassest materialism reigns supreme, all the images used in describing both heaven and hell, with their various denizens, being taken from purely physical material existence — a mere reproduction of earth-life, in fact, and that in the most grossly material sense of the term.

The early church Fathers seem to have held varied opinions on the intermediate *post-mortem* state. Chrysostom wrote: "The very apostles and patriarchs are not yet crowned"; and Ambrose: "The judgment is not at once after death". Several of the Fathers call it Paradise; and Basil refers to "Heaven *and* Paradise." The Council of Florence in 1439 even declared that the just were "received *presently* into heaven".

It is of course needless to refer in detail to the current orthodox Christian teachings, either of the Roman, Greek, or Protestant churches, on these *post-mortem states*. Equally familiar must Dante's *Divine Comedy* be to most; but, as it is possible that Swedenborg's book, the title of which is identical with the subject for our discussion this evening, may be unknown to some present, I would just draw your attention to the fact that from Swedenborg's eminently mystic teachings on the true nature of heaven and hell, we learn that we are not separated from heaven "by *distance of place*, but only by *condition of state*" Heaven, he says, is as near to the heavenly as the soul is to the body; and in a note to paragraph 191 of the Rev. T. Hartley's translation of *Heaven and Hell* (printed in 1778), we find the following concerning space in heaven: "Places and spaces in the Word, signify *states of life*. .... Motion and changes of place in the spiritual world are changes of the *state of life*"; and again (paragraph 193), he says: "*Changes of place* [Page 11] being" only change of *state* . . . hence . . . those are near to each other who are in a similar state, and distant, who are in a dissimilar state; and that *spaces in heaven* are merely *external states* corresponding to *internal* . . ." and so forth.

You may perhaps remember that our own poet, Milton has, in *Paradise Lost*, the following suggestive lines: —

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, or Hell of Heav'n;

— a view which bears a strong resemblance to Swedenborg's ideas upon the subject.

Upon the Norse *Edda* or Scandinavian mythology; and the great epic poem of Finland, the *Kalevala*; and many others, we have no time to touch; and indeed it would prove but a wearisome repetition of the same root ideas, bearing a greater or less resemblance to each other, according to the character of the people, and the times, which gave birth to the particular form of religion or philosophy best suited to express their own genius and evolution.

And now let us, at this point, ask ourselves what may be the real meaning of much that at first sight must appear as almost childishly absurd, in these endless repetitions of hells, heavens, and purgatories; with their, divisions and subdivisions, their rulers and various inhabitants, and the more or less appropriate tortures, penances; and employments indulged in and imposed upon the dwellers in these regions of departed souls. From the Theosophic standpoint I would answer that I cannot for a moment believe it to be possible that the older Eastern philosophies and religions are intended to be accepted, or read, in the dead-letter sense of their sacred books; for it must surely be unmistakably clear to us, as students of the *Secret Doctrine* that beneath all this apparently unnecessary, often meaningless jumble, there lies concealed a profoundly philosophical conception of the states of the soul after death — and indeed for that matter, during life, incarcerated in the flesh — and that these oft-repeated enumerations of places, etc., are simply intended to symbolize varying *states of consciousness*, experienced either during life, or

upon the dissolution of the body.

In Fitzgerald's well-known and incomparable translation of the poem known to us as *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* — the work of the astronomer-poet of Persia in the first quarter of our twelfth century — there occur the following remarkable verses:

I sent my soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of that after-life to spell:  
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,  
And answer'd, "I myself am Heav'n and Hell";  
Heaven but the vision of fulfill'd Desire,  
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire  
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,  
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

[Page 12] Upon that darkness the teachings of Madame Blavatsky have indeed, for us, shed a great light; but Omar's highly metaphysical conception: — "I *myself* am Heav'n and Hell", may very well be taken, I think, as the key-note of the whole Theosophic teaching on this subject — *states of consciousness*, neither more nor less. It has always seemed to me that the words of Jesus of Nazareth, "The kingdom of heaven is within you", have never had sufficient stress laid upon them in this connection, for precisely the same conclusion may surely logically be drawn therefrom.

The point I now wish specially to bring before you, as showing wherein Theosophical teachings differ materially from those of contemporary religions, is this: that whereas heaven, although not a final condition, as will be seen on further examination, can be looked upon as a *post-mortem* state of consciousness, *there is no hell recognized for man but such states as can be, and are, experienced on earth here and now*. In the Glossary to *The Seven Portals*, one of the fragments from *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, Madame Blavatsky says: "Myalba is our earth, pertinently called 'hell', and the greatest of all hells, by the esoteric school. The esoteric doctrine knows of no hell or place of punishment other than a man-bearing planet or earth", and in the *Secret Doctrine* we find her using the terse but forcible phrase: "the infernal regions, our earth". It seems therefore very evident that if all the hells recognized by the esoteric doctrine are "man-bearing planets or earths", such a state, or states, of consciousness clearly cannot be *post mortem*; and indeed this is very plainly laid down in *The Key to Theosophy*, where the Ego is spoken of as being cast down from Devachan, a state of bliss and enjoyment, into hell again, there, or rather here, to suffer in another body. To quote the words of the Key: "We do not admit of any punishment outside of this earth . . . (for) crimes and sins committed on a plane of objectivity and in a world of matter, cannot receive punishment in a world of pure subjectivity." Do we not obtain a hint of this in the story told in the *Shiva Purâna* of the sage Narada, which I have already quoted; and also, again, in the teachings of Confucius?

I fancy no thinking person will dispute the fact, recognized as such by Milton, that we do indeed make our own hell or heaven. Truly so, and we may realize the various gradations of misery, or hells, in our [Page 13] own persons during any one lifetime; and over and over again, through many lives it may be, if we persist in creating the *appropriate conditions*, by reckless pursuit of pleasure or gain for self, regardless of the happiness and well-being of our other selves, our brothers and sisters, whom we cannot injure or neglect without its sooner or later reacting on ourselves. Is not remorse, too, a veritable hell? And has not

the phrase, "the hell of fruitless longing and of unsatisfied desire", become quite a commonplace in literature? Yes, indeed, we are in hell whenever we suffer misery or unhappiness; and there surely *can* be no hell other than a man-bearing planet, for it is difficult to conceive of any place, the present conditions of which are more suited to produce the deepest possible hell than this earth; the lowest of our chain of seven globes.

There, is yet another aspect to this question, and one which touches us very nearly as *thinking*, responsible beings. This is the fact that if —as the Esoteric Philosophy teaches — our thoughts are living, though invisible, things, each endowed with a separate life of its own, a life longer or shorter in proportion to the intensity of the initial mental impulse that gave it birth; then it inexorably follows that we must each one of us perforce aid in creating, a hell (or heaven — but this, alas! more rarely) not only for ourselves, but also for our fellow-men. A hell invisible, it is true, yet none the less real — a hell the character of whose denizens must often be most terrible in its influence on, and consequences to, sensitive and mediumistic natures. Doubtless it is to these unseen dwellers in our mental atmosphere that allusion is made in *The Seven Portals* (already mentioned) where the candidate for initiation is adjured to "harmless make thy own creations, the *children of thy thoughts*, unseen, impalpable, *that swarm round humankind*", etc. [*The Voice of the Silence*, p 55]

I venture to submit that a study of our prisons and lunatic asylums, on these lines, would throw considerable light on many vexed, and hitherto insoluble social problems; such a study would as surely lead us to some terrible conclusions, but could only serve to deepen; and intensify a hundredfold the sense of the very grave and responsible position in which we all of us stand — in regard to our *thoughts* — towards our fellows.

Before considering briefly the Devachanic state of consciousness it may be as well to mention, for the sake of those who are unfamiliar with our teachings, that when the separation of the principles takes place at death, it is — roughly speaking — the three higher which go into Devachan, while the four lower remain on earth, passing into other [Page 14] forms, and states of latency or activity; but eventually gathering together to form the materials for the building up of the next vehicle to be inhabited by the returning Devachanic entity, the reincarnating principle.

The state of Devachan I will take to be synonymous with heaven, in the sense ordinarily attached to the term. In the *Key to Theosophy* it is called "a state of mental bliss. Philosophically a mental condition analogous to, but far more vivid and real than the most vivid dream. It is the state after death of most mortals". And its bliss is *complete*: "It is an absolute oblivion of all that gave it pain or sorrow in the past incarnation, and even oblivion of the fact that such things as pain or sorrow exist at all". How indeed could it be otherwise? For if the Devachanic condition implied one of knowledge, or of omniscience even in a limited sense, then — as Mrs. Besant once declared from this platform — "all heaven would soon be moving hellwards", and *any* state of bliss would be rendered absolutely impossible, in view of the helpless misery and sufferings of those left behind, and whom the soul had loved, on earth. On the contrary, the Devachanee "lives throughout long centuries an existence of *unalloyed* happiness", and this "intermediate cycle between two incarnations is one in which the soul is surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in the companionship of every one it loved on earth".

So then, we find after death no *hell* awaiting the soul, but only heaven; rest and peace in an intensely



vivid though absolutely *subjective* state of consciousness. As Madame Blavatsky says: "All such undying and eternal qualities as love and mercy, the love of the good, the true, and the beautiful, that ever spoke in the heart of the living personality, cling after death to the Ego, and therefore follow it to Devachan", where it is, for the time being, "the ideal *reflection* of the personality that was".

This condition, or state of consciousness, is, however, as said, but a period of rest between two incarnations, by no means a final state; and in this again, we find another vital difference between the Theosophic and all other contemporaneous teaching on the states of the soul after death. Devachan is often called a world of *effects*, the result of *causes* started here on earth, towards which the Ego is once more drawn when those effects — experienced in the Devachanic condition — are exhausted.

But I do not think that we must, or indeed can, draw too hard and fast a line between the states of consciousness that it is possible to experience during earth-life, and the Devachanic states. For a spiritual, pure-minded person — and indeed for most of us in our best [Page 15] and highest moments — I believe it to be quite possible to enter the Devachanic state of consciousness while in the body. May we not, relatively, be said to enter heaven — the very highest — when we renounce something, it may be great, it may be little, that matters not, for the sake of another? give up, that others may benefit by our self-denial, our self-sacrifice ?

It is noteworthy to find the recurrence of the number seven and its multiples, in the enumeration of the hells and heavens in the ancient Hindu and other Scriptures; for Theosophy teaches us that the states of consciousness are seven in number, these being subdivided again almost indefinitely, keeping always to the sevenfold classification and analogy. Of these seven primary states of consciousness the lowest one is given as the ordinary normal waking state (*Jagrat*), and we are bound to infer a wide range of *minor* states of consciousness, included under this term; such indeed as we actually find to be the fact. We are continually shifting our states of consciousness, "moods" we call them, happy, unhappy, depressed, elated, miserable, wretched, and so forth; and even when we close our eyes in sleep and enter the world of dreams (*Svapna*, the dreaming state of consciousness), we carry with us the impressions and experiences of waking life, and live over again in the dream-world familiar and often long-forgotten scenes.

Now there yet remains a view of the question which I have purposely left for our consideration to the last, as being in reality the most important of all. This is the fact, given as such in the teachings of Eastern Esotericism, that *all* the states of consciousness included under the terms heaven and hell are the result of illusion — Mahâ-Mâyâ, the great illusion — for even in Devachan, where every man has his paradise around him, this paradise is said to be erected by *his own consciousness*. Nor is this any new idea, for allusion to it is to be found in so old a book as the *Mahâbhârata*. There, Yudhishtira, after enduring numerous trials and emerging victorious from them all; after the final supreme test — in which he conquers by refusing to abide with his foes in *heaven*, electing rather to share the fate of his friends in *hell* — he is shown that the whole of the scenes through which he has passed are but the effect of Mâyâ, or illusion. And in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, a portion of the same great drama, Krishna teaches Arjuna that above those places to which "the self within" goes when the body is dissolved, is that place "from which" — to quote from Mr. Judge's edition — "those who there take refuge never more return to rebirth, for it is the primeval spirit, from which floweth the never-ending stream of conditioned existence ..... Neither the sun nor the moon nor the [Page 16] fire enlighteneth that place; from it there is no return; it is my supreme abode". It is, in truth, that Nirvanic condition which is so infinitely higher and more sublime a state of

consciousness than the Devachanic state; and "to be fitted for which the soul must have lost entirely every desire or possibility of the world's illusions". In Nirvâna the purified *individual* consciousness is fully blended with the *universal consciousness*, "It is my supreme abode", says Krishna. We cannot even faintly conceive what such a glorified, beatific state may be, limited and conditioned as are our conscious Egos ("the Watcher and the Silent Thinker" within) by the brain-consciousness of the body, and its five senses or avenues of sensation.

Krishna, teaching Arjuna of the after-states of the soul, describes Devachan as being "the spotless spheres of those who are acquainted with the highest place", and says that "the man whose devotion has been broken off by death goeth to the regions of the righteous, where he dwells for an immensity of years, and is then born again on earth in a pure and fortunate family . . ." for "never to an evil place goeth one who doeth good". To this place, this "spotless sphere", goes "the self within". when the body is dissolved at such time as the *Sattva* quality prevails; and as this quality, of the nature of light or truth, is said (by reason of its "lucidity and peacefulness") to "entwine the soul to rebirth through attachment to knowledge and that which is pleasant", the state of Devachan clearly cannot be identical with Nirvana, from which no return — to earth-life — is possible for those who have fully entered it.

Yet there are those, Nirmanakayas the Esoteric Philosophy calls them, Who although They have won the right to enter Nirvâna, Who are past all illusion, and for Whom therefore the comparatively selfish bliss of Devachan is not possible; Who having, through unimaginable sufferings and by Their own personal exertions, won vast knowledge and power which lifts Them high above the world of mortals — do yet choose, of Their own free will, and out of Their divine compassion for this world of suffering men, to renounce Their glorious birthright; deeming "it a selfish act to rest in bliss while all mankind groans under the burden of misery produced by ignorance", and electing to toil till every child of man is emancipated from its yoke. *This* is "The Great Renunciation", one which it is absolutely impossible for us to adequately understand or appreciate; to gauge its immensity, to measure the heights and depths of its divine love and pity, we must be able to realize *what it is* these great ones have renounced, and this we cannot do, it is entirely beyond the possibility of our conception. [Page 17]

Surely, however, the little that we can understand places before us a sufficiently high ideal? A higher than this I do not believe man can conceive of; yet it is one which we, here and now, can *begin* to try and follow, though it may be but afar off; for in acts of renunciation and deeds of compassion, often repeated, daily and hourly, till the inner attitude of renunciation *for the sake of others* becomes the keynote of our lives — surely even we may begin to tread that "small old Path which leadeth far away". It is absolutely and entirely in our own hands. "The kingdom of heaven is within you", said Jesus; and that *now* is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation", is most inexorably true. There is, there can be no other time; the past has gone for ever, the future — as such — exists but in imagination; for, in the words of a sage — known, says Madame Blavatsky, only to a few Occultists — "The present is the child of the past; the future the begotten of the present. And yet, O present moment! knowest thou not that thou hast no parent, nor canst thou have a child; that thou art ever begetting but thyself! Before thou hast even begun to say, 'I am the progeny of the departed moment, the child of the past', thou hast become that past itself. Before thou utterest the last syllable, behold thou art no more the present but verily the future. Thus are the past, the present and the future; the ever-living Trinity in One" [Secret Doctrine, Vol. 2, p 446] — the eternal Now.