

Meditation
Dangers of “sitting for yoga”

Dangers of Meditation, Part 2 of 2



[The Reversed Mirror] by René Magritte

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Foreword

THE “ELIXIR OF LIFE” from a Chela’s diary by G Mitford
IS THE DESIRE TO “LIVE” SELFISH? by HP Blavatsky
CONTEMPLATION, a three-part article by DK Mavalankar

This Part covers *inter alia* meditation proper, the pitfalls of “sitting for yoga,” the constitution of a Mahatma’s physical body, and practical advise on contemplation.

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EDITORS



The “Elixir of Life”

From a Chela's¹ Diary. By G — M — ,² F.T.S.

And Enoch walked with the Elohim, and the Elohim took him.

— GENESIS

INTRODUCTION

[The curious information — for whatsoever else the world may think of it, it will doubtless be acknowledged to be that — contained in the article that follows, merits a few words of introduction. The details given in it on the subject of what has always been considered as one of the darkest and most strictly guarded of the mysteries of the initiation into occultism — from the days of the Rishis until those of the Theosophical Society — came to the knowledge of the author in a way that would seem to the ordinary run of Europeans strange and supernatural. He himself, however, we may assure the reader, is a most thorough disbeliever in the *Supernatural*, though he has learned too much to limit the capabilities of the *natural* as some do. Further, he has to make the following confession of his own belief. It will be apparent, from a careful perusal of the facts, that if the matter be really as stated therein, the author cannot himself be an adept of high grade, as the article in such a case *would never have been written*. Nor does he pretend to be one. He is, or rather was, for a few years a humble *Chela*. Hence, the converse must consequently be also true, that as regards the higher stages of the mystery he can have no personal experience, but speaks of it only as a close observer left to his own surmises — and no more. He may, therefore, boldly state that during, and notwithstanding, his unfortunately rather too short stay with some adepts, he has by actual experiment and observation verified some of the less transcendental or incipient parts of the “*Course*.” And, though it will be impossible for him to give positive testimony as to what lies beyond, he may yet mention that all his own course of study, training and experience, long, severe and dangerous as it has often been, leads him to the conviction that everything is really as stated, save some details *purposely veiled*. For causes which cannot be explained to the public, he himself may be unable or unwilling to use the secret he has gained access to. Still he is permitted by one to whom all his reverential affection and gratitude are due — his last *guru* — to divulge for the benefit of Science and Man, and specially for the good of those who are courageous enough to personally make the experiment, the following astounding particulars of the occult methods for prolonging life to a period far beyond the common — G.M.]

PROBABLY one of the first considerations which move the worldly-minded at present to solicit initiation into Theosophy is the belief, or hope, that, immediately on joining, some extraordinary advantage over the rest of mankind will be conferred upon the candidate. Some even think that the ultimate result of their initiation will perhaps be exemption from that dissolution which is called the common lot of mankind. The traditions of the “Elixir of Life,” said to be in the possession of Kabalists and Alchemists, are still cherished by students of Medieval Occultism — in Europe. The allegory of the *Ab-è Hyat* or *Water of Life*, is still credited as a fact by the degraded remnants of the Asiatic esoteric sects ignorant of the real GREAT SECRET. The “pungent and fiery

¹ A *Chela* is the pupil and disciple of an initiated *Guru* or *Master*. — ED. THEOS.

² [Godolphin Mitford — Boris de Zirkoff] “‘The Elixir of Life’ was written by its author under direct dictation, or inspection, in his own house, in a far away country, in which I had never been till two years later.” *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (RE-CLASSIFICATION OF PRINCIPLES) VII p. 350 [Consult long footnote on pp. 242-43 of Volume VI in the present Series, (pp. 18ff in this document) for Col. Olcott’s account of the writing of “The Elixir of Life,” which does not seem to tally with the above statement. The student is invited to figure out for himself the possible reason for this discrepancy. — Boris de Zirkoff]



Essence,” by which Zanoni renewed his existence, still fires the imagination of modern visionaries as a possible scientific discovery of the future.

Theosophically, though the fact is distinctly declared to be true, the above-named conceptions of the mode of procedure leading to the realization of the fact, are *known* to be false. The reader may or may not believe it; but as a matter of fact, Theosophical Occultists claim to have communication with (living) Intelligences possessing an infinitely wider range of observation than is contemplated even by the loftiest aspirations of modern science, all the present “Adepts” of Europe and America — dabblers in the Kabala — notwithstanding. But far even as those superior Intelligences have investigated (or, if preferred, are alleged to have investigated), and remotely as they may have searched by the help of inference and analogy, even *They* have failed to discover in the Infinity anything permanent but — SPACE. ALL IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Reflection, therefore, will easily suggest to the reader the further logical inference that in a Universe which is essentially impermanent in its conditions, nothing can confer permanency. Therefore, no possible substance, even if drawn from the depths of Infinity; no imaginable combination of drugs, whether of our earth or any other, though compounded by even the Highest Intelligence; no system of life or discipline though directed by the sternest determination and skill, could possibly produce Immutability. For in the universe of solar systems, wherever and however investigated, Immutability necessitates “Non-Being” in the physical sense given it by the Theists — Non-Being which is *nothing* in the narrow conceptions of *Western* Religionists — a *reductio ad absurdum*. This is a gratuitous insult even when applied to the *pseudo-Christian* or ecclesiastical Jehovite idea of God.

Consequently, it will be seen that the common ideal conception of “Immortality” is not only essentially wrong, but a physical and metaphysical impossibility. The idea, whether cherished by Theosophists or non-Theosophists, by Christians or Spiritualists, by Materialists or Idealists, is a chimerical illusion. But the actual prolongation of human life is possible for a time so long as to appear miraculous and incredible to those who regard our span of existence as necessarily limited to at most a couple of hundred years. We may break, as it were, the shock of Death, and instead of dying, change a sudden plunge into darkness to a transition into a brighter light. And this may be made so gradual that the passage from one state of existence to another shall have its friction minimised, so as to be practically imperceptible. This is a very different matter, and quite within the reach of Occult Science. In this, as in all other cases, means properly directed will gain their ends, and causes produce effects. Of course, the only question is, what are these causes, and how, in their turn, are they to be produced. To lift, as far as may be allowed, the veil from this aspect of Occultism, is the object of the present paper.

We must premise by reminding the reader of two Theosophic doctrines, constantly inculcated in “Isis” and in other mystic works — namely, (*a*) that ultimately the Kosmos is *One* — one under infinite variations and manifestations, and (*b*) that the so-called *man* is a “compound being” — composite not only in the exoteric scientific sense of being a congeries of living so-called material Units, but also in the esoteric sense of being a succession of seven forms or parts of itself, interblended with each other. To put it more clearly we might say that the more ethereal forms are but du-



plicates of the same aspect, — each finer one lying within the inter-atomic spaces of the next grosser. We would have the reader understand that these are no subtleties, no “spiritualities” at all in the Christo-Spiritualistic sense. In the actual man reflected in your mirror are really several men, or several parts of one composite man; each the exact counterpart of the other, but the “atomic conditions” (for want of a better word) of each of which are so arranged that its atoms interpenetrate those of the next “grosser” form. It does not, for our present purpose, matter how the Theosophists, Spiritualists, Buddhists, Kabalists, or Vedantists, count, separate, classify, arrange or name these, as that war of terms may be postponed to another occasion. Neither does it matter what relation each of these men has to the various “elements” of the Kosmos of which he forms a part. This knowledge, though of vital importance in other respects, need not be explained or discussed now. Nor does it much more concern us that the Scientists deny the existence of such an arrangement, because their instruments are inadequate to make their senses perceive it. We will simply reply — “get better instruments and keener senses, and *eventually* you will.”

All we have to say is that if you are anxious to drink of the “Elixir of Life,” and live a thousand years or so, you must take our word for the matter at present, and proceed on the assumption. For esoteric science does not give the faintest possible hope that the desired end will ever be attained by any other way; while modern, or so-called exact science — laughs at it.

So, then, we have arrived at the point where we have determined — literally, *not* metaphorically — to crack the outer shell known as the mortal coil or body, and hatch out of it, clothed in our next. This “next” is not spiritual, but only a more ethereal form. Having by a long training and preparation adapted it for a life in this atmosphere, during which time we have gradually made the outward shell to die off through a certain process (hints of which will be found further on) we have to prepare for this physiological transformation.

How are we to do it? In the first place we have the actual, visible, material body — Man, so called; though, in fact, but his outer shell — to deal with. Let us bear in mind that science teaches us that in about every seven years we *change skin* as effectually as any serpent; and this so gradually and imperceptibly that, had not science after years of unremitting study and observation assured us of it, no one would have had the slightest suspicion of the fact.

We see, moreover, that in process of time any cut or lesion upon the body, however deep, has a tendency to repair the loss and reunite; a piece of lost skin is very soon replaced by another. Hence, if a man, partially flayed alive, may sometimes survive and be covered with a new skin, so our astral, vital body — the fourth of the *seven* (having attracted and assimilated to itself the second) and which is so much more ethereal than the physical one — may be made to harden its particles to the atmospheric changes. The whole secret is to succeed in evolving it out, and separating it from the visible; and while its generally invisible atoms proceed to concrete themselves into a compact mass, to gradually get rid of the old particles of our visible frame so as to make them die and disappear before the new set has had time to evolve and replace them. . . . We can say no more. The Magdalene is not the only one who could be accused of having “*seven spirits*” in her, though men who have a lesser



number of spirits (what a misnomer that word!) in them, are not few or exceptional; they are the frequent failures of nature — the incomplete men and women.³

Each of these has in turn to survive the preceding and more dense one, and then *die*. The exception is the sixth when absorbed into and blended with the *seventh*. The “Dhatu”⁴ of the old Hindu physiologist had a dual meaning, the esoteric side of which corresponds with the Tibetan “Zung” (seven principles of the body).

We Asiatics, have a proverb, probably handed down to us, and by the Hindus repeated ignorantly as to its esoteric meaning. It has been known ever since the old Rishis mingled familiarly with the simple and noble people they taught and led on. The Devas had whispered into every man’s ear — *Thou only* — if thou wilt — art “immortal.” Combine with this the saying of a Western author that if any man could just realize for an instant, that he had to die some day, he would die that instant. The *Illuminated* will perceive that between these two sayings, rightly understood, stands revealed the whole secret of Longevity. We only die when our will ceases to be strong enough to make us live. In the majority of cases, death comes when the torture and vital exhaustion accompanying a rapid change in our physical conditions becomes so intense as to weaken, for one single instant, our “clutch on life,” or the tenacity of the will to exist. Till then, however severe may be the disease, however sharp the pang, we are only sick or wounded, as the case may be. This explains the cases of sudden deaths from joy, fright, pain, grief or such other causes. The sense of a life-task consummated, of the worthlessness of one’s existence, *if strongly realized*, produced death as surely as poison or a rifle-bullet. On the other hand, a stern determination to continue to live, has, in fact, carried many through the crises of the most severe diseases, in perfect safety.

First, then, must be the determination — the Will — the conviction of certainty, to survive and continue.⁵ Without that, all else is useless. And to be efficient for the purpose, it must be, not only a passing resolution of the moment, a single fierce desire of short duration, but *a settled and continued strain, as nearly as can be contin-*

³ This is not to be taken as meaning that such persons are thoroughly destitute of some one or several of the seven principles a man born without an arm has still its ethereal counterpart; but that they are so latent that they cannot be developed, and consequently are to be considered as non-existing. — ED. THEOS.

⁴ Dhatu — the seven principal substances of the human body — chyle, flesh, blood, fat, bones, marrow, semen.

⁵ Col. Olcott has epigrammatically explained the creative or rather the re-creative power of the Will, in his “Buddhist Catechism.” He there shows — of course, speaking on behalf of the Southern Buddhists — that this Will to live, if not extinguished in the present life, leaps over the chasm of bodily death, and recombines the *Skandhas*, or groups of qualities that made up the individual into a new personality. Man is, therefore, reborn as the result of his own unsatisfied yearning for objective existence. Col. Olcott puts it in this way:

Q. 123. . . . What is that, in man, which gives him the impression of having a permanent individuality?

A. *Tanha*, or the unsatisfied desire for existence. The being having done that for which he must be rewarded or punished in future, and having *Tanha*, will have a rebirth through the influence of *Karma*.

Q. 124. What is it that is reborn?

A. A new aggregation of *Skandhas*, or individuality, caused by the last earning of the dying person.

Q. 128. To what cause must we attribute the differences in the combination of the Five *Skandhas* has which makes every individual different from every other individual?

A. To the *Karma* of the individual in the next preceding birth.

Q. 129. What is the force or energy that is at work, under the, guidance of *Karma*, to produce the new being?

A. *Tanha* — the “Will to Live.”



ued and concentrated without one single moment's relaxation. In a word, the would-be "Immortal" must be on his watch night and day, guarding self against — himself. To live — to live — to live — must be his unswerving resolve. He must as little as possible allow himself to be turned aside from it. It may be said that this is the most concentrated form of selfishness, — that it is utterly opposed to our Theosophic professions of benevolence, and disinterestedness, and regard for the good of humanity. Well, viewed in a short-sighted way, it is so. But to do good, as in everything else, a man *must have* time and materials to work with, and this is a necessary means to the acquirement of powers by which infinitely more good can be done than without them. When these are once mastered, the opportunities to use them will arrive, for there comes a moment when further watch and exertion are no longer needed: — the moment when the turning-point is safely passed. For the present as we deal with aspirants and not with advanced *chelas*, in the first stage a determined, dogged resolution, and an enlightened concentration of self on self, are all that is absolutely necessary. It must not, however, be considered that the candidate is required to be unhuman or brutal in his negligence of others. Such a recklessly selfish course would be as injurious to him as the contrary one of expending his vital energy on the gratification of his physical desires. All that is required from him is a purely negative attitude. Until the turning-point is reached, he must not "lay out" his energy in lavish or fiery devotion to any cause, however noble, however "good," however elevated.⁶ Such, we can solemnly assure the reader, would bring its reward in many ways — perhaps in another life, perhaps in this world, but it would tend to shorten the existence it is desired to preserve, as surely as self-indulgence and profligacy. That is why very few of the truly great men of the world (of course, the unprincipled adventurers who have applied great powers to bad uses are out of the question) — the martyrs, the heroes, the founders of religions, the liberators of nations, the leaders of reforms — ever became members of the long-lived "Brotherhood of Adepts" who were by some and for long years accused of *selfishness*. (And that is also why the Yogis, and the Fakirs of modern India — most of whom are acting now but on the *dead-letter* tradition, are required if they would be considered living up to the principles of their profession — to appear *entirely dead* to every inward feeling or emotion.) Notwithstanding the purity of their hearts, the greatness of their aspirations, the disinterestedness of their self-sacrifice, they *could not live for they had missed the hour*. They may at times have exercised powers which the world called miraculous; they may have electrified man and subdued Nature by fiery and self-devoted Will; they may have been possessed of a so-called superhuman intelligence; they may have even had knowledge of, and communion with, members of our own occult Brotherhood; but, having deliberately resolved to devote their vital energy to the welfare of others, rather than to themselves, they have surrendered life; and, when perishing on the cross or the scaffold, or falling, sword in hand, upon the battle-field, or sinking exhausted after a

⁶ On page 151 of Mr. Sinnett's "Occult World," the author's much abused, and still more doubted correspondent assures him that none yet of his "degree are like the stern hero of Bulwer's" Zanoni . . . "the heartless morally dried up mummies some would fancy us to be" and adds that few of them "would care to play the part in life of a desiccated pansy between the leaves of a volume of solemn poetry." But our adept omits saying that *one or two degrees higher*, and he will have to submit for a period of years to such a mummifying process unless, indeed, he would voluntarily give up a life-long labour and — Die — ED. THEOS.



successful consummation of the life-object, on death-beds in their chambers, they have all alike had to cry out at last: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!”

So far so good. But, given the will to live, however powerful, we have seen that, in the ordinary course of mundane life, the throes of dissolution cannot be checked. The desperate, and again and again renewed struggle of the Kosmic elements to proceed with a career of change despite the will that is checking them, like a pair of runaway horses struggling against the determined driver holding them in, are so cumulatively powerful, that the utmost efforts of the *untrained* human will acting within an *unprepared* body become ultimately useless. The highest intrepidity of the bravest soldier; the interest desire of the yearning lover; the hungry greed of the unsatisfied miser; the most undoubting faith of the sternest fanatic; the practised insensibility to pain of the hardiest red Indian brave or half-trained Hindu Yogi; the most deliberate philosophy of the calmest thinker — all alike fail at last. Indeed, sceptics will allege in opposition to the verities of this article that, as a matter of experience, it is often observed that the mildest and most irresolute of minds and the weakest of physical frames are often seen to resist “Death” longer than the powerful will of the high-spirited and obstinately-egotistic man, and the iron frame of the labourer, the warrior and the athlete. In reality, however, the key to the secret of these apparently contradictory phenomena is the true conception of the very thing we have already said. If the physical development of the gross “outer shell” proceeds on parallel lines and at an equal rate with that of the will, it stands to reason that no advantage *for the purpose of overcoming it*, is attained by the latter. The acquisition of improved breech-loaders by one modern army confers no absolute superiority if the enemy also becomes possessed of them. Consequently it will be at once apparent, to those who think on the subject, that much of the training by which what is known as “a powerful and determined nature,” perfects itself for its own purpose on the stage of the visible world, necessitating and *being useless* without a parallel development of the “gross” and so-called animal frame, is, in short, neutralized, for the purpose at present treated of, by the fact that its own action has armed the enemy with weapons equal to its own. The *force* of the impulse to dissolution is rendered equal to the will to oppose it; and being cumulative, subdues the will-power and triumphs at last. On the other hand, it may happen that an apparently weak and vacillating will-power residing in a weak and undeveloped physical frame, may be so *reinforced* by some unsatisfied desire — the *Ichcha (wish)* — as it is called by the Indian Occultists (for instance, a mother’s heart-yearning to remain and support her fatherless children) — as to keep down and vanquish, for a short time, the physical throes of a body to which it has become temporarily superior.

The whole *rationale* then, of the first condition of continued existence in this world, is (a) the development of a Will so powerful as to overcome the hereditary (in a Darwinian sense) tendencies of the atoms composing the “gross” and palpable animal frame, to hurry on at a particular period in a certain course of Kosmic change; and (b) to so weaken the concrete action of that animal frame as to make it more amenable to the power of the Will. To defeat an army, *you must demoralize and throw it into disorder.*

To do this then, is the real object of all the rites, ceremonies, fasts, “prayers,” meditations, initiations and procedures of self-discipline enjoined by various esoteric East-



ern sects, from that course of pure and elevated aspiration which leads to the higher phases of Adeptism Real, down to the fearful and disgusting ordeals which the adherent of the “Left-hand-Road” has to pass through, all the time maintaining his equilibrium. The procedures have their merits and their demerits, their separate uses and abuses, their essential and non-essential parts, their various veils, mummeries, and labyrinths. But in all, the result aimed at is reached, if by different processes. The Will is strengthened, encouraged and directed, and the elements opposing its action are *demoralized*. Now, to any one who has thought out and connected the various evolution theories, as taken, not from any occult source, but from the ordinary scientific manual accessible to all — from the hypothesis of the latest variation in the habits of species — say, the acquisition of carnivorous habits by the New Zealand parrot, for instance — to the farthest glimpses backwards into Space and Eternity afforded by the “*Fire Mist*” doctrine, it will be apparent that they all rest on one basis. That basis is, that the impulse once given to a hypothetical Unit has a tendency to continue; and consequently, that anything “done” by something at a certain time and certain place tends to repeat itself at other times and places.

Such is the admitted *rationale* of heredity and atavism. That the same things apply to our ordinary conduct is apparent from the notorious ease with which “habits,” — bad or good, as the case may be — are acquired, and it will not be questioned that this applies, as a rule, as much to the moral and intellectual, as to the physical world.

Furthermore, History and Science teach us plainly that certain physical habits conduce to certain moral and intellectual results. There never yet was a conquering nation of vegetarians. Even in the old Aryan times, we do not learn that the very Rishis, from whose lore and practice we gain the knowledge of Occultism, ever interdicted the *Kshetriya* (military) caste from hunting or a carnivorous diet. Filling, as they did, a certain place in the body politic in the actual condition of the world, the Rishis as little thought of interfering with them, as of restraining the tigers of the jungle from their habits. That did not affect what the Rishis did themselves.

The aspirant to longevity then must be on his guard against *two dangers*. He must beware especially of impure and animal⁷ thoughts. For Science shows that thought is dynamic, and the thought-force evolved by nervous action expanding outwardly, must affect the molecular relations of the physical man. The *inner men*,⁸ however sublimated their organism may be, are still composed of actual, *not hypothetical*, particles, and are still subject to the law that an “action” has a tendency to repeat itself; a tendency to set up analogous action in the grosser “shell” they are in contact with, and concealed within.

And, on the other hand, certain actions have a tendency to produce actual physical conditions unfavourable to pure thoughts, hence to the state required for developing the supremacy of the inner man.

⁷ In other words, the thought tends to provoke the deed. — G.M.

⁸ We use the word in the plural, reminding the reader that, according to our doctrine, man is septenary. — G.M.



To return to the practical process. A normally healthy mind, in a normally healthy body, is a good starting-point. Though exceptionally powerful and self-devoted natures may sometimes recover the ground lost by mental degradation or physical misuse, by employing proper means, under the direction of unswerving resolution, yet often things may have gone so far that there is no longer stamina enough to sustain the conflict sufficiently long to perpetuate this life; though what in Eastern parlance is called the “merit” of the effort will help to ameliorate conditions and improve matters in another.

However this may be, the prescribed course of self-discipline commences here. It may be stated briefly that its essence is a course of moral, mental, and physical development, carried on in parallel lines — one being useless without the other. The physical man must be rendered more ethereal and sensitive; the mental man more penetrating and profound; the moral man more self-denying and philosophical. And it may be mentioned that all sense of restraint — even if self-imposed — is useless. Not only is all “goodness” that results from the compulsion of physical force, threats, or bribes (whether of a physical or so-called “spiritual” nature) absolutely useless to the person who exhibits it, its hypocrisy tending to poison the moral atmosphere of the world, but the desire to be “good” or “pure,” to be efficacious must be spontaneous. It must be a self-impulse from within, a real preference for something higher, not an abstention from vice because of fear of the law: not a chastity enforced by the dread of Public Opinion; not a benevolence exercised through love of praise or dread of consequences in a hypothetical Future Life.⁹

It will be seen now in connection with the doctrine of the tendency to the renewal of action, before discussed, that the course of self-discipline recommended as the only road to Longevity by Occultism is *not* a “visionary” theory dealing with vague “ideas,” but actually a scientifically devised system of drill. It is a system by which each particle of the several men composing the septenary individual receives an impulse, and a habit of doing what is necessary for certain purposes of its own free-will and with “pleasure.” Every one must be practised and perfect in a thing to do it with pleasure. This rule especially applies to the case of the development of Man. “Virtue” may be very good in its way — it may lead to the grandest results. But to become efficacious it has to be practised cheerfully not with reluctance or pain. As a consequence of the above consideration the candidate for Longevity at the commencement of his career must begin to eschew his physical desires, not from any sentimental theory of right or wrong, but for the following good reason. As, according to a well-known and now established scientific theory, his visible material frame is always renewing its particles; he will, while abstaining from the gratification of his desires, reach the end of a certain *period* during which those particles which composed the man of vice, and which were given a bad predisposition, will have departed. At the same time, the disuse of such functions will tend to obstruct the entry, in place of the old particles, of new particles having a tendency to repeat the said acts. And while this is the *particular* result as regards certain “vices,” the general result of an abstention from “gross”

⁹ Col. Olcott clearly and succinctly explains the Buddhist doctrine of Merit or *Karma*, in his “Buddhist Catechism” (Question 83). — G.M.



acts will be (by a modification of the well-known Darwinian law of atrophy by non-usage) to diminish what we may call the “relative” density and coherence of the outer shell (as a result of its less-used molecules); while the diminution in the quantity of its actual constituents will be “made up” (if tried by scales and weights) by the increased admission of more ethereal particles.

What physical desires are to be abandoned and in what order? First and foremost, he must give up alcohol in all forms; for while it supplies no nourishment, nor any direct pleasure (beyond such sweetness or fragrance as may be gained in the taste of wine, &c., to which alcohol, in itself, is non-essential) to even the grossest elements of the “physical” frame, it induces a violence of action, a rush so to speak, of life, the stress of which can only be sustained by very dull, gross, and dense elements, and which, by the operation of the well-known law of Re-action (in commercial phrase, “supply and demand”) tends to summon them from the surrounding universe, and therefore directly counteracts the object we have in view.

Next comes meat-eating, and for the very same reason, in a minor degree. It increases the rapidity of life, the energy of action, the violence of passions. It may be good for a hero who has to fight and die, but not for a would-be sage who has to exist and . . .

Next in order come the sexual desires; for these, in addition to the great diversion of energy (vital force) into other channels, in many different ways, beyond the primary one (as, for instance, the waste of energy in expectation, jealousy, &c.), are direct attractions to a certain gross quality of the original matter of the Universe, simply because the most pleasurable physical sensations are only possible at that stage of density. Alongside with and extending beyond all these and other gratifications of the senses (which include not only those things usually known as “vicious,” but all those which, though ordinarily regarded as “innocent,” have yet the disqualification of ministering to the pleasures of the body — the most harmless to others and the least “gross” being the criterion for those to be last abandoned in each case) — must be carried on the moral purification.

Nor must it be imagined that “austerities” as commonly understood can, in the majority of cases, avail much to hasten the “etherealizing” process. That is the rock on which many of the Eastern esoteric sects have foundered, and the reason why they have degenerated into degrading superstitions. The Western monks and the Eastern Yogees, who think they will reach the apex of powers by concentrating their thought on their navel, or by standing on one leg, are practising exercises which serve no other purpose than to strengthen the willpower, which is sometimes applied to the basest purposes. These are examples of this one-sided and dwarf development. It is no use to fast *as long as you require food*. The ceasing of desire for food without impairment of health is the sign which indicates that it should be taken in lesser and ever decreasing quantities until the extreme limit compatible with life is reached. A stage will be finally attained where only water will be required.

Nor is it of any use for this particular purpose of longevity to abstain from immorality so long as you are craving for it in your heart; and so on with all other unsatisfied



inward cravings. To get rid of the inward desire is the essential thing, and to mimic the real thing without it is barefaced hypocrisy and useless slavery.

So it must be with the moral purification of the heart. The “basest” inclinations must go first — then the others. First avarice, then fear, then envy, worldly pride, uncharitableness, hatred; last of all ambition and curiosity must be abandoned successively. The strengthening of the more ethereal and so-called “spiritual” parts of the man must go on at the same time. Reasoning from the known to the unknown, meditation must be practised and encouraged. Meditation is the inexpressible yearning of the inner Man to “go out towards the infinite,” which in the olden time was the real meaning of adoration, but which has now no synonym in the European languages, because the thing no longer exists in the West, and its name has been vulgarized to the make-believe shams known as prayer, glorification, and repentance. Through all stages of training the equilibrium of the consciousness — the assurance that all *must* be right in the Kosmos, and therefore with *you* a portion of it — must be retained. The process of life must not be hurried but retarded, if possible; to do otherwise may do good to others — perhaps even to yourself in other spheres, but it will hasten your dissolution in this.

Nor must the externals be neglected in this first stage. Remember that an adept, though “existing” so as to convey to ordinary minds the idea of his being immortal, is not also invulnerable to agencies from without. The training to prolong life does not, in itself, secure one from accidents. As far as any physical preparation goes, the sword may still cut, the disease enter, the poison disarrange. This case is very clearly and beautifully put in “Zanoni,” and it is correctly put and must be so, unless all “adeptism” is a baseless lie. The adept may be more secure from ordinary dangers than the common mortal, but he is so by virtue of the superior knowledge, calmness, coolness and penetration which his lengthened existence and its necessary concomitants have enabled him to acquire; not by virtue of any preservative power in the process itself. He is secure as a man armed with a rifle is more secure than a naked baboon; not secure in the sense in which the deva (god) was supposed to be securer than a man.

If this is so in the case of the high adept, how much more necessary is it that the neophyte should be not only protected but that he himself should use all possible means to ensure for himself the necessary duration of life to complete the process of mastering the phenomena we call death! It may be said, why do not the higher adepts protect him? Perhaps they *do* to some extent, but the child must learn to walk alone; to make him independent of his own efforts in respect to safety, would be destroying one element necessary to his development — the sense of responsibility. What courage or conduct would be called for in a man sent to fight when armed with irresistible weapons and clothed in impenetrable armour? Hence the neophyte should endeavour, as far as possible, to fulfill every true canon of sanitary law as laid down by modern scientists. Pure air, pure water, pure food, gentle exercise, regular hours, pleasant occupations and surroundings, are all, if not indispensable, at least serviceable to his progress. It is to secure these, at least as much as silence and solitude, that the Gods, Sages, Occultists of all ages have retired as much as possible to the quiet of the country, the cool cave, the depths of the forest, the expanse of the



desert, or the heights of the mountains. Is it not suggestive that the Gods have always loved the “high places”; and that in the present day the highest section of the Occult Brotherhood on earth inhabits the highest mountain plateaux of the earth?¹⁰

Nor must the beginner disdain the assistance of medicine and good medical regimen. He is still an ordinary mortal, and he requires the aid of an ordinary mortal.

“Suppose, however, all the conditions required, or which will be understood as required (for the details and varieties of treatment requisite, are too numerous to be detailed here), are fulfilled, what is the next step?” the reader will ask. Well if there have been no backslidings or remissness in the procedure indicated, the following physical results will follow: —

First the neophyte will take more pleasure in things spiritual and pure. Gradually gross and material occupations will become not only uncraved for or forbidden, but simply and literally repulsive to him. He will take more pleasure in the simple sensations of Nature — the sort of feeling one can remember to have experienced as a child. He will feel more light-hearted, confident, happy. Let him take care the sensation of renewed youth does not mislead, or he will yet risk a fall into his old baser life and even lower depths. “Action and Re-action are equal.”

Now the desire for food will begin to cease. Let it be left off gradually — no fasting is required. Take what you feel you require. The food craved for will be the most innocent and simple. Fruit and milk will usually be the best. Then as till now, you have been simplifying the quality of your food, gradually — very gradually — as you feel capable of it diminish the quantity. You will ask: “Can a man exist without food?” No, but before you mock, consider the character of the process alluded to. It is a notorious fact that many of the lowest and simplest organisms have no excretions. The common guinea-worm is a very good instance. It has rather a complicated organism, but it has no ejaculatory duct. All it consumes — the poorest essences of the human body — is applied to its growth and propagation. Living as it does in human tissue, it passes no digested food away. The human neophyte, at a certain stage of his development, is in a somewhat analogous condition, with this difference or differences, that he *does* excrete, but it is through the pores of his skin, and by those too enter other etherialized particles of matter to contribute towards his support.¹¹ Otherwise, all the food and drink is sufficient only to keep in equilibrium those “gross” parts of his physical body which still remain to repair their cuticle-waste through the medium of the blood. Later on, the process of cell-development in his frame will undergo a change; a change for the better, the opposite of that in disease for the worse — he will become *all* living and sensitive, and will derive nourishment from the Ether (Akas). But that epoch for our neophyte is yet far distant.

¹⁰ The stern prohibition to the Jews to serve “their gods upon the high mountains and upon the hills” is traced back to the unwillingness of their ancient elders, to allow people in most cases unfit for adeptship to choose a life of celibacy and asceticism, or in other word., to pursue adeptship. This prohibition had an esoteric meaning before it became the prohibition, incomprehensible in its dead-letter sense: for it is not India alone whose sons accorded divine honours to the WISE ONES, but all nations regarded their adepts and initiates as divine. — G.M.

¹¹ He is in a state similar to the physical state of a foetus before birth into the world. — G.M.



Probably, long before that period has arrived, other results, no less surprising than incredible to the uninitiated will have ensued to give our neophyte courage and consolation in his difficult task. It would be but a truism to repeat what has been again alleged (in ignorance of its real *rationale*) by hundreds and hundreds of writers as to the happiness and content conferred by a life of innocence and purity. But often at the very commencement of the process some real physical result, unexpected and unthought of by the neophyte, occurs. Some lingering disease, hitherto deemed hopeless, may take a favourable turn; or he may develop healing mesmeric powers himself; or some hitherto unknown sharpening of his senses may delight him. The *rationale* of these things is, as we have said, neither miraculous nor difficult of comprehension. In the first place, the sudden change in the direction of the vital energy (which, whatever view we take of it and its origin, is acknowledged by all schools of philosophy as most recondite, and as the motive power) must produce results of some kind. In the second, Theosophy shows, as we said before, that a man consists of several men pervading each other, and on this view (although it is very difficult to express the idea in language) it is but natural that the progressive etherealization of the densest and most gross of all should leave the others literally more at liberty. A troop of horses may be blocked by a mob and have much difficulty in fighting its way through; but if every one of the mob could be changed suddenly into a ghost, there would be little to retard it. And as each interior entity is more rare, active, and volatile than the outer and as each has relation with different elements, spaces, and properties of the Kosmos which are treated of in other articles on Occultism, the mind of the reader may conceive — though the pen of the writer could not express it in a dozen volumes — the magnificent possibilities gradually unfolded to the neophyte.

Many of the opportunities thus suggested may be taken advantage of by the neophyte for his own safety, amusement, and the good of those around him; *but the way in which* he does this is one adapted to his fitness — a part of the ordeal he has to pass through, and misuse of these powers will certainly entail the loss of them as a natural result. The *Itchcha* (or desire) evoked anew by the vistas they open up will retard or throw back his progress.

But there is another portion of the Great Secret to which we must allude, and which is *now*, for the first, in a long series of ages, allowed to be given out to the world, as the hour for it is come.

The educated reader need not be reminded again that one of the great discoveries which has immortalized the name of Darwin is the law that an organism has always a tendency to repeat, at an analogous period in its life, the action of its progenitors, the more surely and completely in proportion to their proximity in the scale of life. One result of this is, that, in general, organized beings usually die at a period (on an average) the same as that of their progenitors. It is true that there is a great difference between the *actual* ages at which individuals of any species die. Disease, accidents and famine are the main agents in causing this. But there is, in each species, a well-known limit within which the Race-life lies, and none are known to survive beyond it. This applies to the human species as well as any other. Now, supposing that every possible sanitary condition had been complied with, and every accident and



disease avoided by a man of ordinary frame, in some particular case there would still, as is known to medical men, come a time when the particles of the body would feel the hereditary tendency to do that which leads inevitably to dissolution, *and would obey it*. It must be obvious to any reflecting man that, if by *any procedure* this critical climacteric could be once thoroughly passed over, the subsequent danger of “Death” would be proportionally less as the years progressed. Now this, which no ordinary and unprepared mind and body can do, is possible sometimes for the will and the frame of one who has been specially prepared. There are fewer of the grosser particles present to feel the hereditary bias — there is the assistance of the reinforced “interior men” (whose normal duration is always greater even in natural death) to the visible outer shell, and there is the drilled and indomitable Will to direct and wield the whole.¹²

From that time forward the course of the aspirant is clearer. He has conquered “the Dweller of the Threshold” — the hereditary enemy of his race, and, though still exposed to ever-new dangers in his progress towards Nirvana, he is flushed with victory, and with new confidence and new powers to second it, can press onwards to perfection.

For, it must be remembered, that nature everywhere acts by Law, and that the process of purification we have been describing in the visible material body, also takes place in those which are interior, and not visible to the scientist by modifications of the same process. All is on the change, and the metamorphoses of the more ethereal bodies imitate, though in successively multiplied duration, the career of the grosser, gaining an increasing wider range of relations with the surrounding kosmos, till in Nirvana the most rarefied Individuality is merged at last into the INFINITE TOTALITY.

From the above description of the process, it will be inferred why it is that “Adepts” are so seldom seen in ordinary life; for, *pari passu*, with the etherealization of their bodies and the development of their power, grows an increasing distaste, and a so-to-speak, “contempt” for the things of our ordinary mundane existence. Like the fugitive who successively casts away in his flight those articles which incommode his progress, beginning with the heaviest, so the aspirant eluding “Death” abandons all on which the latter can take hold. In the progress of Negation everything got rid of is a help. As we said before, the adept does not become “immortal” as the word is ordinarily understood. By or about the time when the Death-limit of his race is passed he is *actually dead*, in the ordinary sense, that is to say, he has relieved himself of all or nearly all such material particles as would have necessitated in disruption the agony of dying. He has been dying gradually during the whole period of his Initiation. The catastrophe cannot happen twice over. He has only spread over a number of years the mild process of dissolution which others endure from a brief moment to a few

¹² In this connection we may as well show what modern science, and especially *physiology* has to say as to the power of the human will. “The force of will is a potent element in determining longevity. This single point must be granted without argument, that of two men every way alike and similarly circumstanced, the one who has the greater courage and grit will be longer-lived. One does not need to practise medicine long to learn that men die who might just as well live if they resolved to live, and that myriads who are invalids could become strong if they had the native or acquired will to vow they would do so. Those who have no other quality favourable to life, whose bodily organs are nearly all diseased, to whom each day is a day of pain, who are beset by life-shortening influences, yet do live by will alone.” — *Dr. George M. Beard*



hours. The highest Adept is, in fact, dead to, and absolutely unconscious of, the world; he is oblivious of its pleasures, careless of its miseries, in so far as sentimentalism goes, for the stern sense of DUTY never leaves him blind to its very existence. For the new ethereal senses opening to wider spheres are to ours much in the relation of ours to the Infinitely Little. New desires and enjoyments, new dangers and new hindrances arise, with new sensations and new perceptions; and far away down in the mist — both literally and metaphorically — is our dirty little earth left below by those who have virtually “gone to join the gods.”

And from this account too, it will be perceptible how foolish it is for people to ask the Theosophist to “procure for them communication with the highest Adepts.” It is with the utmost difficulty that one or two can be induced, even by the throes of a world, to injure their own progress by meddling with mundane affairs. The ordinary reader will say: “This is not *god-like*. This is the acme of selfishness.” . . . But let him realize that a very high Adept, undertaking to reform the world, would necessarily have to once more submit to Incarnation. And is the result of all that have gone before in that line sufficiently encouraging to prompt a renewal of the attempt?

A deep consideration of all that we have written, will also give the Theosophists an idea of what they demand when they ask to be put in the way of gaining *practically* “higher powers.” Well, there, as plainly as words can put it, is the PATH. . . . Can they tread it?

Nor must it be disguised that what to the ordinary mortal are unexpected dangers, temptations and enemies also beset the way of the neophyte. And that for no fanciful cause, but the simple reason that he is, in fact, acquiring new senses, has yet no practice in their use, and has never before seen the things he sees. A man born blind suddenly endowed with vision would not at once master the meaning of perspective, but would, like a baby, imagine in one case, the moon to be within his reach, and, in the other, grasp a live coal with the most reckless confidence.

And what, it may be asked, is to recompense this abnegation of all the pleasures of life, this cold surrender of all mundane interests, this stretching forward to an unknown goal which seems ever more unattainable? For, unlike some of the anthropomorphic creeds, Occultism offers to its votaries no eternally permanent heaven of material pleasure, to be gained at once by one quick dash through the grave. As has, in fact, often been the case many would be prepared willingly to die *now* for the sake of the paradise hereafter. But Occultism gives no such prospect of cheaply and immediately gained infinitude of pleasure, wisdom and existence. It only promises extensions of these, stretching in successive arches obscured by successive veils, in an unbroken series up the long vista which leads to NIRVANA. And this too, qualified by the necessity that new powers entail new responsibilities, and that the capacity of increased pleasure entails the capacity of increased sensibility to pain. To this, the only answer that can be given is two-fold: (1st) the consciousness of Power is itself the most exquisite of pleasures, and is unceasingly gratified in the progress onwards with new means for its exercise and (2^{ndly}) as has been already said — THIS is the only road by which there is the faintest scientific likelihood that “Death” can be avoided, perpetual memory secured, infinite wisdom attained, and hence an immense helping of mankind made possible, once that the adept has safely crossed the



turning-point. Physical as well as metaphysical logic requires and endorses the fact that only by gradual absorption into infinity can the Part become acquainted with the Whole, and that that which is *now something* can only feel, know, and enjoy EVERYTHING when lost in Absolute Totality in the vortex of that *Unalterable Circle* wherein our Knowledge becomes Ignorance, and the Everything itself is identified with the NOTHING.



The Introspector by Gilbert Williams



Is the Desire to “Live” Selfish?

First published in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, No. 10 (58), July 1884, pp. 242-243. Republished in: *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, VI pp. 241-48.

The passage “to Live, to live, TO LIVE must be the unswerving resolve,” occurring in the article on the *Elixir of Life*, published in the March and April [1882] Numbers of Vol. III of *The Theosophist* — is often quoted by superficial and unsympathetic readers as an argument that the teachings of occultism are the most concentrated form of selfishness.¹³ In order to determine whether the critics are right or wrong, the meaning of the word “selfishness” must first be ascertained.

¹³ [This remarkable article was written by Mirza Murad Ali Beg. This was an *alias* for Godolphin Mitford, a scion of the old Hampshire family of the Mitfords. His father had served with the East India Company. He was born at Madras and was a very eccentric and peculiar character. He had dabbled in black magic with a selfish motive in view, and had thereby provoked the action of certain elemental entities which played havoc with his consciousness. He was a Mohammedan at the time he came to H.P. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott at their residence in Bombay, on Jan. 20, 1881. His life had been full of wild adventures. Col. Henry S. Olcott writes of him as follows (*Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. II, pp. 289-91):

“ . . . when we met him, [he] was in the military employ of the Maharajah of Bhaunagar as ‘Chief Cavalry Officer’ — practically a sinecure. His had been a wild, adventurous life, more full of misery than the opposite. He had dabbled in Black Magic, among other things, and told me that all the sufferings he had passed through within the preceding few years were directly traceable to the malign persecutions of certain evil powers which he had summoned to help him get into his power a virtuous lady whom he coveted . . . he himself fell under the power of the bad spirits whom he had not the moral strength to dominate after having accepted their compulsory service. Certainly he was a distressful person to be with. Nervous, excitable, fixed on nothing, the slave of his caprices, seeing the higher possibilities of man’s nature, yet unable to reach them, he came to us as to a refuge, and shortly after took up his residence in our house for a few weeks. A strange-looking creature for an Englishman he was. His dress was that of a Muslim throughout, save that he had his long light-brown hair tied up in a Grecian knot behind his head, like a woman. His complexion was fair and his eyes light blue. In my Diary I say that he looked more like an actor made up for a part than anything else. The writing of the *Elixir of Life* occurred some time later, but I may as well tell the story while he is under my mind’s eye.

“From the time that he came to us he seemed to be engaged in a strong mental and moral conflict within himself. He complained of being dragged hither and thither, first by good, then by bad influences. He had a fine mind, and had done a good deal of reading; he wanted to join our Society, but, as I had no confidence in his moral stamina, I refused him. H.P.B., however, offering to become responsible for him, I relented and let her take him in. He repaid her nicely, some months later, by snatching a sword from a sepoy at Wadhwan station, and trying to kill her, crying out that she and her Mahatmas were all devils! In short, he went mad. But to return. While with us he wrote some articles which were printed in *The Theosophist*, and one evening after a talk with us, sat himself down to write on the power of the will to affect longevity. H.P.B. and I remained in the room, and when he began his writing she went and stood behind him, just as she had in New York when Harisse was making his sketch of one of the Masters, under her thought-transference. The article of Mirza Saheb attracted deserved attention on its appearance (see *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, March and April, 1882, pp. 140-42, 168-71), and has ever since ranked as one of the most suggestive and valuable pamphlets in our Theosophical literature. He was doing well, and there was a good chance for him to retrieve much of his lost spirituality if he would only stop with us; but after giving his promise to do so, he obeyed an irresistible impulse and rushed back to Wadhwan and to destruction. His mind did not recover its equilibrium; he turned Roman Catholic, then recanted back into Islam, and finally died, and was buried at Junagadh, where I have seen his humble tomb. His case has always seemed to me a dreadful instance of the danger one runs in dabbling with occult science while the animal passions are rampant.”

Regarding this extraordinary personage, two passages occur in H.P.B.’s *The Secret Doctrine*. They are as follows:

“ . . . an Englishman whose erratic genius killed him. The son of a Protestant clergyman, he became a Mahomedan, then a rabid atheist, and after meeting with a *master*, a Guru, he became a mystic; then a theosophist who doubted, despaired; threw up *white* for *black* magic, went insane and joined the Roman Church. Then again turning round, anathematized her, re-became an atheist, and died cursing humanity, knowledge, and God, in whom he had ceased to believe. Furnished with all the esoteric data to write his ‘War in Heaven,’ he made a semi-political article out of it, mixing Malthus with Satan, and Darwin with the astral light. Peace be to his — *Shell*. He is a warning to the chelas who fail. His forgotten tomb may now be seen in the Mussulman burial ground of the Joonagadh, Kathiawar, in India.” (Vol. II, pp. 244-45, fnote).

[Continued overleaf.]

“ . . . he was a most extraordinary Mystic, of a great learning and remarkable intelligence. But he left



According to an established authority, selfishness is that “exclusive regard to one’s own interest or happiness; that supreme self-love or self-preference which leads a person to direct his purposes to the advancement of his own interest, power, or happiness, without regarding those of others.”

In short, an absolutely selfish individual is one who cares for himself and none else, or, in other words, one who is so strongly imbued with a sense of the importance of his own personality that to him it is the crown of all thoughts, desires, and aspirations, and beyond which lies the perfect blank. Now, can an occultist be then said to be “selfish when he desires to live in the sense in which that word is used by the writer of the article on the *Elixir of Life*? It has been said over and over again that the ultimate end of every aspirant after occult knowledge is *Nirvana* or *Mukti*, when the individual, freed from all *Mayavic Upadhi*, becomes one with *Paramatma*, or the Son identifies himself with the Father in Christian phraseology. For that purpose, every veil of illusion which creates a sense of personal isolation, a feeling of separateness from THE ALL, must be torn asunder, or, in other words, the aspirant must gradually discard all sense of selfishness with which we are all more or less affected. A study of the Law of Kosmic Evolution teaches us that the higher the evolution, the more does it tend towards Unity. In fact, Unity is the ultimate possibility of Nature, and those who through vanity and selfishness go against her purposes, cannot but incur the punishment of annihilation. The occultist thus recognizes that unselfishness and a feeling of universal philanthropy are the inherent laws of our being, and all he does is to attempt to destroy the chains of selfishness forged upon us all by *Maya*. The struggle then between Good and Evil, God and Satan, *Suras* and *Asuras*, *Devas* and *Daityas*, which is mentioned in the sacred books of all the nations and races, symbolizes the battle between unselfish and selfish impulses, which takes place in a man, who tries to follow the higher purposes of Nature, until the lower animal tendencies, created by selfishness, are completely conquered, and the enemy thoroughly routed and annihilated. It has also been often put forth in various Theosophical and other occult writings that the only difference between an ordinary man who works along with Nature during the course of Kosmic evolution and an occultist, is that the latter, by his superior knowledge, adopts such methods of training and discipline as will hurry on that process of evolution, and he thus reaches in a comparatively short time the apex which the ordinary individual will take perhaps billions of years to reach. In short, in a few thousand years he approaches that type of evolution which ordinary humanity attains in the sixth or seventh Round of the *Manvantara*, i.e., cyclic progression. It is evident that an average man cannot become a MAHATMA in one life, or rather in one incarnation. Now those, who have studied the occult teachings concerning *Devachan* and our after-states, will remember that between two incarnations there is a considerable period of subjective existence. The greater the number of such *Devachanic* periods, the greater is the number of years over which this evolution is extended. The chief aim of the occultist is therefore to so control himself as to be able to regulate his future states, and thereby gradually shorten the duration of

the Right Path and forthwith fell under Karmic retribution . . .” (Vol. II, p. 541, fnote).

Nevertheless, H.P.B. recommends in several places his remarkable essay on the “War in Heaven” (*The Theosophist*, Vol. III, Nos. 1-3, Oct., Nov., and Dec., 1881, pp. 24-25, 36-38, 67-70, respectively) and quotes several passages from it in *The Secret Doctrine*. — Boris de Zirkoff.]



his *Devachanic* existence between two incarnations. In the course of his progress, there comes a time when, between one physical death and his next rebirth, there is no *Devachan* but a kind of spiritual sleep, the shock of death, having, so to say, stunned him into a state of unconsciousness from which he gradually recovers to find himself reborn, to continue his purpose. The period of this sleep may vary from twenty-five to two hundred years, depending upon the degree of his advancement. But even this period may be said to be a waste of time, and hence all his exertions are directed to shorten its duration so as to gradually come to a point when the passage from one state of existence into another is almost imperceptible. This is his last incarnation, as it were, for the shock of death no more stuns him. This is the idea the writer of the article on the *Elixir of Life* means to convey when he says:

By or about the time when the Death-limit of his race is passed HE IS ACTUALLY DEAD, in the ordinary sense, that is to say, he has relieved himself of all or nearly all such material particles as would have necessitated in disruption the agony of dying. He has been dying gradually during the whole period of his Initiation. The catastrophe cannot happen twice over, he has only spread over a number of years the mild process of dissolution which others endure from a brief moment to a few hours. The highest Adept is, in fact, dead to, and absolutely unconscious of, the World he is oblivious of its pleasures, careless of its miseries, in so far as sentimentalism goes, for the stern sense of Duty never leaves him blind to its very existence. . . .

The process of the emission and attraction of atoms, which the occultist controls, has been discussed at length in that article and in other writings. It is by these means that he gets rid gradually of all the old gross particles of his body, substituting for them finer and more ethereal ones, till at last the former *sthula sharira* is completely dead and disintegrated, and he lives in a body entirely of his own creation, suited to his work. That body is essential to his purposes; as the *Elixir of Life* says: —

To do good, as in every thing else, a man *must have* time and materials to work with, and this is a necessary means to the acquirement of powers by which infinitely more good can be done than without them. When these are once mastered, the opportunities to use them will arrive . . .

Giving the practical instructions for that purpose, the same paper continues: —

The physical man must be rendered more ethereal and sensitive; the mental man more penetrating and profound; the moral man more self-denying and philosophical.

Losing sight of the above important considerations, the following passage is entirely misunderstood: —

And from this account too, it will be perceptible how foolish it is for people to ask the Theosophist “to procure for them communication with the highest Adepts.” It is with the utmost difficulty that one or two can be induced, even by the throes of a world, to injure their own progress by meddling with mundane affairs. The ordinary reader will say: “This is not *god-like*. This is the acme of selfishness.” But let him realize that a very high Adept, undertaking to reform



the world, would necessarily have to once more submit to Incarnation. And is the result of all that have gone before in that line sufficiently encouraging to prompt a renewal of the attempt?

Now, in condemning the above passage as inculcating selfishness, superficial critics neglect many profound truths. In the first place, they forget the other extracts already quoted which impose *self-denial* as a necessary condition of success, and which say that, with progress, new senses and new powers are acquired with which infinitely more good can be done than without them. The more spiritual the Adept becomes the less can he meddle with *mundane gross* affairs and the more he has to confine himself to spiritual work. It has been repeated, times out of number, that the work on the spiritual plane is as superior to the work on the intellectual plane as the latter is superior to that on the physical plane. The very *high* Adepts, therefore, do help humanity, *but only spiritually*: they are constitutionally incapable of meddling with *worldly* affairs. But this applies only to very high Adepts. There are various degrees of Adeptship, and those of each degree work for humanity on the planes to which they may have risen. It is only the *chelas* that can live in the world, until they rise to a certain degree. And it is because the Adepts *do* care for the world that they make their *chelas* live in and work for it, as many of those who study the subject are aware. Each cycle produces its own occultists capable of working for the humanity of the time on all the different planes; but when the Adepts foresee that at a particular period the then humanity will be incapable of producing occultists for work on particular planes, for such occasions they do provide by either voluntarily giving up their further progress and waiting until humanity reaches that period, or by refusing to enter into *Nirvana* and submitting to re-incarnation so as to be ready for work when the time comes. And although the world may not be aware of the fact, yet there are even now certain Adepts who have preferred to remain *in statu quo* and refuse to take the higher degrees, for the benefit of the future generations of humanity. In short, as the Adepts work harmoniously, since unity is the fundamental law of their being, they have, as it were, made a division of labour, according to which each works on the plane appropriate to himself for the spiritual elevation of us all — and the process of longevity mentioned in the *Elixir of Life* is only the means to the end which, far from being selfish, is the most unselfish purpose for which a human being can labour.

HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY



What is Contemplation?

From Eek S. (*Comp. & Annot.*). *Dāmodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement*. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1965; pp. 388-400.

Contemplation I

From *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, No. 5, February 1884, pp. 112-14.

[Dāmodar's thoughts on Contemplation show maturity well beyond his years. His frequent references to "The Elixir of Life," by Mirza Murad Ali Beg who, at the time the following article was written, had already alienated himself from the companionship of the Theosophists, show the powerful influence this brilliant man still exercised upon his quondam friends.

Concentration could possibly be substituted for Contemplation which practice is described in *The Yoga Aphorism* of Patanjali. Readers of Theosophical Literature have often expressed concern regarding apparent contradictions in its philosophy. One of the reasons for such contradictions lies in the fact that there are many gradations of spiritual development. The beginner has to content himself with the work of the beginner, while the man who has purified his heart and strengthened his will can undertake tasks of greater magnitude. — S.E.]

A general misunderstanding of this term seems to prevail. The popular idea appears to be to confine oneself for half an hour — or at the utmost two hours — in a private room, and passively gaze at one's nose, a spot on the wall, or, perhaps, a crystal. This is supposed to be the true form of contemplation enjoined by *Raj Yoga*. It fails to realize that true occultism requires "physical, mental, moral and spiritual" development to run on parallel lines. Were the narrow conception extended to all these lines, the necessity for the present article would not have been so urgently felt. This paper is specially meant for the benefit of those who seem to have failed to grasp the real meaning of Dhyan, and by their erroneous practices to have brought, and to be bringing, pain and misery upon themselves. A few instances may be mentioned here with advantage, as a warning to our too zealous students.

At Bareilly the writer met a certain Theosophist from Farrukhabad, who narrated his experiences and shed bitter tears of repentance for his past follies — as he termed them. It would appear from his account that the gentleman, having read *Bhagavat-Gita* about fifteen or twenty years ago and not comprehending the esoteric meaning of the contemplation therein enjoined, undertook nevertheless the practice and carried it on for several years. At first he experienced a sense of pleasure, but simultaneously he found he was gradually losing self-control; until after a few years he discovered, to his great bewilderment and sorrow, that *he was no longer his own master*. He felt his heart actually growing heavy, as though a load had been placed on it. He had no control over his sensations; in fact the communication between the brain



and the heart had become as though interrupted. As matters grew worse, in disgust he discontinued his “contemplation.” This happened as long as seven years ago; and, although since then he has not felt worse, yet he could never regain his original normal and healthy state of mind and body.

Another case came under the writer’s observation at Jubbulpore. The gentleman concerned, after reading Patanjali and such other works, began to sit for “contemplation.” After a short time he commenced seeing abnormal sights and hearing musical bells, but neither over these phenomena nor over his own sensations could he exercise any control. He could not produce these results at will, nor could he stop them when they were occurring. Numerous such examples may be multiplied. While penning these lines, the writer has on his table two letters upon this subject, one from Moradabad and the other from Trichinopoly. In short, all this mischief is due to a misunderstanding of the significance of contemplation as enjoined upon students by all the schools of Occult Philosophy. With a view to afford a glimpse of the Reality through the dense veil that enshrouds the mysteries of this Science of Sciences, an article, the “Elixir of Life,” was written. Unfortunately, in too many instances, the seed seems to have fallen upon barren ground. Some of its readers only catch hold of the following clause in the said paper: —

Reasoning from the known to the unknown meditation must be practised and encouraged.

But, alas! their preconceptions have prevented them from comprehending what is meant by meditation. They forget that it “is the inexpressible yearning of the inner Man to ‘go out towards the infinite,’ which in the olden time was the real meaning of adoration” — as the next sentence shows. A good deal of light will be thrown upon this subject if the reader were to turn to the preceding portion of the same paper, and peruse attentively the following paras. on page 141 of the *Theosophist* for March, 1882 (Vol. III, No. 6): —

So, then, we have arrived at the point where we have determined, — literally, *not* metaphorically — to crack the outer shell known as the mortal coil, or body, and hatch out of it, clothed in our next. This ‘next’ is not a spiritual, but only a more ethereal form. Having by a long training and preparation adapted it for a life in this atmosphere, during which time we have gradually made the outward shell to die off through a certain process . . . we have to prepare for this physiological transformation.

How are we to do it? In the first place we have the actual, visible, material body — man, so called, though, in fact, but his outer shell — to deal with. Let us bear in mind that science teaches us that in about every seven years we *change skin* as effectually as any serpent; and this so gradually and imperceptibly that, had not science after years of unremitting study and observation assured us of it, no one would have had the slightest suspicion of the fact. . . . Hence, if a man partially flayed alive, may sometimes survive and be covered with a new skin, — so our astral, vital body . . . may be made to harden its particles to the atmospheric changes. The whole secret is to succeed in evolving it out, and separating it from the visible; and while its generally invisible



atoms proceed to concrete themselves into a compact mass, to gradually get rid of the old particles of our visible frame so as to make them die and disappear before the new set has had time to evolve and replace them. . . . We can say no more.

A correct comprehension of the above scientific process will give a clue to the esoteric meaning of meditation or contemplation. Science teaches us that man changes his physical body continually, and this change is so gradual that it is almost imperceptible. Why then should the case be otherwise with the *inner man*? The latter too is constantly developing and changing atoms at every moment. And the attraction of these new sets of atoms depends upon the Law of Affinity — the desires of the man drawing to their bodily tenement only such particles as are *en rapport* with them or rather giving them their own tendency and colouring.

. . . For science shows that thought is dynamic, and the thought-force evolved by nervous action expanding itself outwardly, must affect the molecular relations of the physical man. The *inner men*, however sublimated their organism may be, are still composed of actual, *not hypothetical*, particles, and are still subject to the law that an 'action' has a tendency to repeat itself; a tendency to set up analogous action in the grosser 'shell' they are in contact with and concealed within. (*The Elixir of Life*.)

What is it the aspirant of *Yog Vidya* strives after if not to gain *Mukti* by transferring himself gradually from the grosser to the next more ethereal body, until all the veils of *Maya* being successively removed his *Atma* becomes one with *Paramatma*? Does he suppose that this grand result can be achieved by a two or four hours' contemplation? For the remaining twenty or twenty-two hours that the devotee does not shut himself up in his room for meditation — is the process of the emission of atoms and their replacement by others stopped? If not, then how does he mean to attract all this time, — only those suited to his end? From the above remarks it is evident that just as the physical body requires incessant attention to prevent the entrance of a disease, so also the *inner man* requires an unremitting watch, so that no conscious or unconscious thought may attract atoms unsuited to its progress. This is the real meaning of contemplation. The prime factor in the guidance of the thought is WILL.

. . . Without that, all else is useless. And, to be efficient for the purpose, it must be, not only a passing resolution of the moment, a single fierce desire of short duration, but *a settled and continued strain, as nearly as can be continued and concentrated without one single moment's relaxation*.

The student would do well to take note of the italicized clause in the above quotation. He should also have it indelibly impressed upon his mind that

It is no use to fast *as long as one requires* food. . . . To get rid of the inward desire is the essential thing, and to mimic the real thing without it is bare-faced hypocrisy and useless slavery.

Without realizing the significance of this most important fact, any one who for a moment finds cause of disagreement with any one of his family, or has his vanity wounded, or for a sentimental flash of the moment, or for a selfish desire to utilize the divine power for gross purposes — at once rushes in for contemplation and



dashes himself to pieces on the rock dividing the known from the unknown. Wallowing in the mire of exotericism, he knows not what it is to live in the world and yet be not of the world; in other words to guard *self* against *self* is an incomprehensible axiom for nearly every profane. The Hindu ought at least to realize it by remembering the life of Janaka, who, although a reigning monarch, was yet styled *Rajarshi* and is said to have attained *Nirvana*. Hearing of his widespread fame, a few sectarian bigots went to his Court to test his *Yoga*-power. As soon as they entered the court-room, the king having read their thought — a power which every *chela* attains at a certain stage — gave secret instructions to his officials to have a particular street in the city lined on both sides by dancing girls who were ordered to sing the most voluptuous songs. He then had some *gharas* (pots) filled with water up to the brim so that the least shake would be likely to spill their contents. The wiseacres, each with a full *ghara* (pot) on his head, were ordered to pass along the street, surrounded by soldiers with drawn swords to be used against them if even so much as a drop of water were allowed to run over. The poor fellows having returned to the palace after successfully passing the test, were asked by the King-Adept what they had met with in the street they were made to go through. With great indignation they replied that the threat of being cut to pieces had so much worked upon their minds that they thought of nothing but the water on their heads, and the intensity of their attention did not permit them to take cognizance of what was going on around them. Then Janaka told them that on the same principle they could easily understand that, although being outwardly engaged in managing the affairs of his state, he could at the same time be an Occultist. He too, while *in* the world, was not *of* the world. In other words, his inward aspirations had been leading him on continually to the goal in which his whole inner self was concentrated.

Raj Yoga encourages no sham, requires no physical postures. It has to deal with the inner man whose sphere lies in the world of thought. To have the highest ideal placed before oneself and strive incessantly to rise up to it, is the only true concentration recognized by Esoteric Philosophy which deals with the inner world of *noumena*, not the outer shell of *phenomena*.

The first requisite for it is thorough purity of heart. Well might the student of Occultism say, with Zoroaster, that purity of thought, purity of word, and purity of deed, — these are the essentials of one who would rise above the ordinary level and join the “gods.” A cultivation of the feeling of unselfish philanthropy is the path which has to be traversed for that purpose. For it is that alone which will lead to Universal Love, the realization of which constitutes the progress towards deliverance from the chains forged by Maya around the Ego. No student will attain this at once, but as our VENERATED MAHATMA says in the *Occult World*: —

The greater the progress towards deliverance, the less this will be the case, until, to crown all, human and purely individual personal feelings, blood-ties and friendship, patriotism and race predilection, will all give way to become blended into one universal feeling, the only true and holy, the only unselfish and eternal one, Love, an Immense Love for Humanity as a whole.¹⁴

¹⁴ [p. 152 in the American edition. — S.E.]



In short, the individual is blended with the ALL.

Of course, contemplation, as usually understood, is not without its minor advantages. It develops one set of physical faculties as gymnastics does the muscles. For the purposes of physical mesmerism, it is good enough; but it can in no way help the development of the psychological faculties as the thoughtful reader will perceive. At the same time, even for ordinary purposes, the practice can never be too well guarded. If, as some suppose, they have to be entirely passive and lose themselves in the object before them, they should remember that by thus encouraging passivity, they, in fact, allow the development of mediumistic faculties in themselves. As was repeatedly stated — the Adept and the Medium are the two Poles: while the former is intensely active and thus able to control the elemental forces, the latter is intensely passive, and thus incurs the risk of falling a prey to the caprice and malice of mischievous embryos of human beings, and — the Elementaries.

Contemplation II

From *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, No. 7, April 1884, pp. 170-71.¹⁵

In the article on the above subject in the February *Theosophist* occurs the following:

1. Without realizing the significance of this most important fact, any one who for a moment finds cause of disagreement with any one of his family, or has his vanity wounded, or for a sentimental flash of the moment, or for a selfish desire to utilize the divine power for gross purposes — at once rushes in for contemplation and dashes himself to pieces on the rock dividing the known from the unknown.

I cannot understand how an ordinary man, who has, on one hand, the above-mentioned defects in his nature, (which he generally tries to control, though sometimes with questionable success); and who, on the other hand, tries also to practise contemplation as explained in the article, runs the danger of being ruined. What are the dangers? Can they be named, and the particular causes which give rise to them?

2. To have the highest ideal placed before oneself and strive incessantly to rise up to it, is the only true concentration recognized by Esoteric Philosophy.

This passage is too learned for an ordinary man. Can an example of “the highest ideal” be given? How is the ordinary man of the world to strive after it?

Suppose an ordinary man of the world rises in the calm hours of the morning after a moderate rest, what is he to do? What kind of ideas should he fill his mind with? How is he to sit? How is he to carry on the contemplation so as to steer clear of all shoals and rocks in the sea of occultism? The greatest aim of the man in question is to spiritualize himself as much as could be done *safely*, so that if he cannot eventu-

¹⁵ [Comment by “F.T.S.” with Damodar’s Note appended thereto. See previous article on the same subject — S.E.]



ally be accepted as a chela, in this life — he may at least have the *assurance* to lead the life of an ascetic in the next birth.

An F.T.S.

Note. — I regret the whole article is totally misunderstood. All I meant to say was that temporary estrangement, from family or friends, does not constitute an essential qualification for advancement in occultism. This ought to be plain to one who weighs carefully my illustration of Janaka. Although *in* the world, to be not *of* it. Failing to realise the meaning of this important teaching, many a people rush in from a sentimental disgust of worldliness, arising probably out of some worldly disappointment — and begin practising what they consider to be a true form of *contemplation*. The very fact that the *motive* which leads them to go in for this practice, is as is described in the quotation given by my correspondent — this fact itself is a sufficient indication that the candidate does not know the “contemplation” of a *Raja Yogi*. It is thus impossible in the nature of things that he can follow the right method; and the physical practice, which he necessarily undertakes, leads him to the disastrous results adverted to in the article.

Any reader, who has intuition enough to be a practical student of occultism, will at once see that to work up to perfection is the highest ideal that a man can have before him. That is not the work of a day nor of a few years. “The Adept *becomes*; he is NOT MADE” — is a teaching which the student must first realise. The aspirant works up to his goal through a series of lives. Col. Olcott says in his *Buddhist Catechism*: —

“. . . Countless generations are required to developed man into a Buddha, and the iron will to become one runs throughout all the successive births.”

That “*iron will*” to become *perfect* must be *incessantly* operating, without a single moment’s relaxation, as will be apparent to one who reads *carefully the article as a whole*. When it is distinctly said that during the time that this contemplation is not practised, *i.e.*, the iron will is not exerting, the process of the emission and attraction of atoms is not stopped, and that the desires, instinctive or otherwise, must be so regulated as to attract only such atoms as may be suited to his progress — I cannot understand my correspondent when he asks me what he should do at a particular hour in the morning. He should cultivate only such thoughts as would not be incompatible with the highest ideal he has to work up to. By perfection, which should be his highest ideal, (I must add) I mean that *divine* manhood which the Occult Philosophy contemplates the seventh race of the seventh Round will attain to. This, as every tyro knows, depends largely upon a cultivation of the feeling of Universal Love, and hence an earnest desire to do some practical philanthropic work is the first requisite. Even this state, I admit, is not *absolute perfection*: but that maximum limit of ultimate Spiritual perfection is beyond our comprehension at present. That condition can only be intellectually realized as a practical ideal by those *divine men* — Dhyan-Chohans. To be identified with THE ALL, we must live in and feel through it. How can this be done without the realisation of the feeling of Universal Love? Of course Adeptship is not within the easy reach of all. On the other hand, occultism does not



fix any unpleasant place or locality for those who do not accept its dogmas. It only recognises higher and higher evolution according to the chain of causation working under the impulse of Nature's immutable law. The article on "Occult Study"¹⁶ in the last number gives the necessary explanation on this point.

It is painful for me to find that the very thing I attempted to point out in that article to be mischievous in its results, is again put forward as a desirable attribute or adjunct of true contemplation. I would ask my correspondent to read again the same article, with these additional remarks, before thinking of the necessity of any peculiar or particular posture for the purpose of *contemplation*. I, at any rate, am unable to prescribe any specific posture for the kind of *incessant contemplation* that I recommend.

— D.K.M.

Contemplation III

[From *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, No. 11, August 1884, pp. 267-68.]

[This is a separate article, independent of the previous item under the same title.
— S.E.]

Notwithstanding the article on the above subject in the February *Theosophist*, many of its readers still seem to imagine that "contemplation" is a particular form of gazing or staring at something, which process, when undergone a set number of hours every day, will give psychological powers. This misunderstanding is apparently due to the fact that the main point discussed has been lost sight of. Instead of realising that there is but one chief idea meant to be conveyed by that article by arguing it through many of its phases, it seems to be imagined that almost every sentence expresses quite a distinct idea. It may not therefore be uninteresting or unprofitable to revert to the subject and put forward the same idea from another stand-point and, if possible, in a clearer light. It must first be borne in mind that the writer of the article did not at all mean to imply the act of gazing by the word "contemplation." The former word would have been made use of, were that the idea. "The Imperial Dictionary of the English Language," (1883) — defines the word contemplation thus: —

(1) The act of the mind in considering with attention; meditation; study; continued attention of the mind to a particular subject. Specifically — (2) Holy meditation; attention to sacred things.

Webster's Dictionary thoroughly revised — also gives the same meaning.

Thus we find that contemplation is the "continued attention of the mind to a particular subject," and, religiously, it is the "attention to sacred things." It is therefore difficult to imagine how the idea of gazing or staring came to be associated with the word

¹⁶ [Republished in *Five Years of Theosophy*, pp. 221-29. — S.E.]



contemplation, unless it be due to the fact that generally it so happens that when any one is deeply absorbed in thought, he apparently seems to be gazing or staring at something in blank space. But this gazing is the effect of the act of contemplation. And, as usually happens, here too the effect seems to be confounded with the cause. Because the gazing attitude follows the act of contemplation, it is at once assumed that gazing is the cause which produces contemplation! Bearing this well in mind, let us now see what kind of contemplation (or meditation) the *Elixir of Life* recommends for the aspirants after occult knowledge. It says: —

Reasoning from the known to the unknown meditation must be practised and encouraged.

That is to say, a *chela's* meditation should constitute the “reasoning from the known to the unknown.” The “known” is the phenomenal world, cognisable by our five senses. And all that we see in this manifested world are the effects, the causes of which are to be sought after in the noumenal, the unmanifested, the “unknown world”: this is to be accomplished by meditation, *i.e.*, continued attention to the subject. Occultism does not depend upon one method, but employs both the deductive and the inductive. The student must first learn the general axioms. For the time being, he will of course have to take them as assumptions, if he prefers to call them so. Or as the *Elixir of Life* puts it: —

All we have to say is that if you are anxious to drink of the *Elixir of Life* and live a thousand years or so, you must take our word for the matter, at present, and proceed on the assumption. For esoteric science does not give the faintest possible hope that the desired end will ever be attained by any other way; while modern, or the so-called exact science laughs at it.

These axioms have sufficiently been laid out in the articles on the *Elixir of Life* and various others treating on occultism, in the different numbers of the *Theosophist*. What the student has first to do is to *comprehend* these axioms and, by employing the deductive method, to proceed from universals to particulars. He has then to reason from the “known to the unknown,” and see if the inductive method of proceeding from particulars to universals supports those axioms. This process forms the primary stage of true contemplation. The student must first grasp the subject intellectually before he can hope to realise his aspirations. When this is accomplished, then comes the next stage of meditation which is “the inexpressible yearning of the inner man to ‘go out towards the infinite.’” Before any such yearning can be properly directed, the goal, to which it is to be its aim to run, must be determined by the preliminary stages. The higher stage, in fact, consists in realising practically what the first steps have placed within one’s comprehension. In short, contemplation, in its true sense, is to recognise the truth of Éliphas Lévi’s saying: —

To believe without knowing is weakness; to believe, because one knows, is power.

Or, in other words, to see that “KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.” The *Elixir of Life* not only gives the preliminary steps in the ladder of *contemplation* but also tells the reader how to *realise* the higher conceptions. It traces, by the process of contemplation as it were, the relation of man, “the known,” the manifested, the phenomenon, to “the un-



known,” the unmanifested, the noumenon. It shows to the student what ideal he should contemplate and how to rise up to it. It places before him the nature of the inner capacities of man and how to developed them. To a superficial reader, this may, perhaps, appear as the acme of selfishness. Reflection or contemplation will, however, show the contrary to be the case. For it teaches the student that to comprehend the noumenal, he must identify himself with Nature. Instead of looking upon himself as an isolated being, he must learn to look upon himself as a part of the INTEGRAL WHOLE. For, in the unmanifested world, it can be clearly perceived that all is controlled by the “Law of Affinity,” the attraction of one to the other. There, all is Infinite Love, understood in its true sense.

It may now be not out of place to recapitulate what has already been said. The first thing to be done is to study the axioms of Occultism and work upon them by the deductive and inductive methods, which is real contemplation. To turn this to a useful purpose, what is theoretically comprehended must be practically realised. It is to be hoped that this explanation may make the meaning of the former article on this subject clearer.

DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR

