

*Psychological and conjuring  
tricks employed by strolling  
jugglers and fakirs.*



## *Abstract and train of thoughts*<sup>1</sup>

### **On the magical tricks employed by strolling jugglers and fakirs.**

There does not exist a professional wizard, either of the North, South, or West, who can compete with anything approaching success, with the untutored, naked sons of the East. 4

### **The basis of magic is the life-principle, a blind force obeying a controlling influence.**

All magical operations consist in freeing one's self from the coils of the Ancient Serpent. 7

When a man, through the complete subjugation of matter, has attained that state of purification at which the spirit becomes nearly freed from its prison, he has become a creative force on earth, and can command the elements and powers of nature. 8

Purified from the contact with matter, the powerful will and spirit of the fakir condenses the essence of plant life into its germ, and forces it to maturity ahead of its time. For will in motion is force, and force produces matter. 9

### **The spirit of man is like that of his Creator, omniscient in its essence.**

Strolling Indian jugglers are neither pure in their modes of living, nor holy. They are generally feared and despised by the natives, for they are practitioners of the black art. 10

### **Psychological versus conjuring tricks.**

The only explanation given by the Society for Psychical Research for these phenomena is it does not understand, and is incapable of understanding, what is going on. 16

Fakir is a Mussulman devotee whose whole time is taken up by acts of holiness such as standing for days on one leg, or on the top of his head. But the saintly Hindu Yogi does not take "collections" after the exhibition of his psychic powers. The man Ellmore and Lessing saw was a public juggler, known in India as Jadoowalla or sorcerer. 16

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<sup>1</sup> Frontispiece: Indian Fakir (c 1874-76) by Vasily Vasilyevich Vereshchagin, Tretyakov Gallery. Illustration on page 12: French Fakir, by Michael Cheval (born Mikhail Khokhlachev).

**Public jugglers are not sleight of hand conjurers, they are mesmerisers  
endowed with phenomenal powers.**

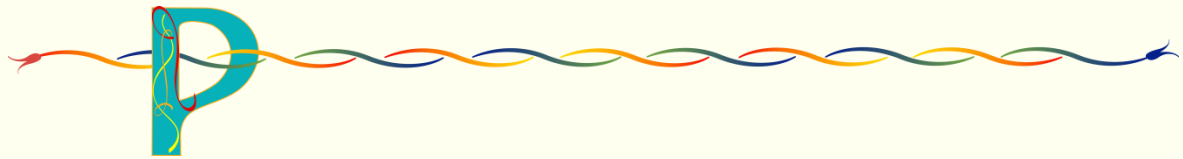
Between hypnotism and Mesmerism lies an impassable chasm. 17

Glamour and fascination are entirely different from hypnotism. 17

Occultism does not admit claims of bodily disintegration, for a living creature, whether  
man or mosquito, cannot be “disintegrated” and live. 18

**Suggested reading for students.**

On Black versus White Magic. 20



## On the magical tricks employed by strolling jugglers and fakirs.

**There does not exist a professional wizard, either of the North, South, or West, who can compete with anything approaching success, with the untutored, naked sons of the East.**

From *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 73-74.

The mirror of the soul cannot reflect both earth and heaven, and the one vanishes from its surface, as the other is glassed upon its deep.

— ZANONI<sup>1</sup>

Qui, donc, t'a donné la mission d'annoncer au peuple que la Divinité n'existe pas — quel avantage trouves tu à persuader à l'homme qu'une force aveugle preside à ses destinees et frappe au hasard le crime et la vertu?

— ROBESPIERRE, *Discours sur la Constitution*, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1794

**WE BELIEVE THAT FEW OF THOSE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA**, which are genuine, are caused by disembodied human spirits. Still, even those that are produced by occult forces of nature, such as happen through a few genuine mediums, and are consciously employed by the so-called “jugglers” of India and Egypt, deserve a careful and serious investigation by science; especially now that a number of respected authorities have testified that in many cases the hypothesis of fraud does not hold. No doubt, there are professed “conjurers” who can perform cleverer tricks than all the American and English “John Kings”<sup>2</sup> together. Robert Houdin<sup>3</sup> unquestionably could, but this did not prevent his laughing outright in the face of the academicians, when they desired him to assert in the newspapers, that he could make a table move, or rap answers to questions, *without contact of hands*, unless the table was a prepared one.<sup>4</sup> The fact alone, that a now notorious London juggler refused to accept a challenge for £1,000 offered him by Mr. Algernon Joy,<sup>5</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> [Full text in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>2</sup> [Cf. “I have *known* and *conversed* with many a ‘John King’ in my life — a generic name for more than one spook — but thank heaven, I was never yet ‘controlled’ by one! My mediumship has been crushed out of me a quarter of a century or more; and I defy loudly all the ‘spirits’ of the *Kāma-loka* to approach — let alone to control me *now*.” *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (Mr. A. Lillie’s Delusions) VI p. 271]

<sup>3</sup> [Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, 1805–1871, French watchmaker, magician and illusionist, widely recognized as the father of the modern style of conjuring. He transformed magic from a pastime for the lower classes, seen at fairs, to an entertainment for the wealthy, which he offered in a theatre opened in Paris, a legacy preserved by the tradition of modern magicians to perform in tails.]

<sup>4</sup> See de Mirville’s *Question des Esprits*, [p. 32] and *Tables tournantes, etc.*, by de Gasparin.

<sup>5</sup> Honorary Secretary to the National Association of Spiritualists of London.



produce such manifestations as are usually obtained through mediums, unless he was left *unbound* and *free* from the hands of a committee, negatives his *exposé* of the occult phenomena. Clever as he may be, we defy and challenge him to reproduce, under the *same conditions*, the “tricks” exhibited even by a common Indian *juggler*. For instance, the spot to be chosen by the investigators at the moment of the performance, and the juggler to know nothing of the choice; the experiment to be made in broad daylight, without the least preparations for it; without any confederate but a boy absolutely naked, and the juggler to be in a condition of semi-nudity. After that, we should select out of a variety three *tricks*, the most common among such public jugglers, and that were recently exhibited to some gentlemen belonging to [74] the suite of the Prince of Wales:

- 1 To transform a rupee — firmly clasped in the hand of a sceptic — into a living cobra, the bite of which would prove fatal, as an examination of its fangs would show.
- 2 To cause a seed chosen at random by the spectators, and planted in the first semblance of a flower-pot, furnished by the same sceptics, to grow, mature, and bear fruit in less than a quarter of an hour.
- 3 To stretch himself on three swords, stuck perpendicularly in the ground at their hilts, the sharp points upward; after that, to have removed [the] first one of the swords, then the other, and, after an interval of a few seconds, the last one, the juggler remaining, finally, lying on *nothing* — on the air, miraculously suspended at about one yard from the ground.

When any prestidigitateur, to begin with Houdin and end with the last trickster who has secured gratuitous advertisement by attacking spiritualism, does *the same*, then — but only then — we will train ourselves to believe that mankind has been evolved out of the hind toe of Mr. Huxley’s Eocene *Orohippus*.<sup>1</sup>

We assert again, in full confidence, that there does not exist a professional wizard, either of the North, South, or West, who can compete with anything approaching success, with these untutored, naked sons of the East. These require no Egyptian Hall for their performances, nor any preparations or rehearsals; but are ever ready, at a moment’s notice, to evoke to their help the hidden powers of nature, which, for European prestidigitateurs as well as for scientists, are a closed book. Verily, as Elihu puts it,

. . . great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment.<sup>2</sup>

To repeat the remark of the English divine, Dr. Henry More,<sup>3</sup> we may well say:

. . . indeed, if there were any modesty left in mankind, the Histories of the Bible might abundantly assure men of the existence of angels and spirits.

The same eminent man adds,

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<sup>1</sup> [Orohippus (from the Greek *ὄρος*, mountain, and *ἵππος* horse) refers to an extinct equid that lived in the Eocene, about 50 million years ago.]

<sup>2</sup> [Job xxxii, 9]

<sup>3</sup> [Henry More FRS, 1614–1687, English philosopher of the Cambridge Platonist school.]

I look upon it as a special piece of Providence that . . . fresh examples of apparitions . . . may awaken [our] benumbed and lethargic minds into an . . . assurance that there are other intelligent Beings besides those that are clad in heavy earth or clay . . . [for this evidence, showing] that there are bad spirits, will necessarily open a door to the belief that there are good ones, and lastly, that there is a God.<sup>1</sup>

The instance above given carries a moral with it, not only to scientists, but theologians. Men who have made their mark in the pulpit and in professors' chairs, are continually showing the lay public that they really know so little of psychology, as to take up with any plausible schemer who comes their way, and so make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of the thoughtful student. Public opinion upon this subject has been manufactured by jugglers and self-styled savants, unworthy of respectful consideration.



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<sup>1</sup> [Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus*, pp. 14, 16 — a book on witchcraft published posthumously in England in 1681]

## The basis of magic is the life-principle, a blind force obeying a controlling influence.

### All magical operations consist in freeing one's self from the coils of the Ancient Serpent.

From *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 137-42.

Éliphas Lévi,<sup>1</sup> the modern magician, describes the astral light in the following sentence:

We have said that to acquire magical power, two things are necessary: to disengage the will from all servitude, and to exercise it in control.

The sovereign will is represented in our symbols by the woman who crushes the serpent's head, and by the resplendent angel who represses the dragon, and holds him under his foot and spear; the great magical agent, the dual current of light, the living and astral *fire* of the earth, has been represented in the ancient theogonies by the serpent with the head [138] of a bull, a ram, or a dog.

- It is the double serpent of the *caduceus*,
- It is the Old Serpent of the *Genesis*, but
- It is also the *brazen serpent of Moses* entwined around the *tau*, that is to say, the generative *lingam*.
- It is also the goat of the witch-Sabbath, and the Baphomet of the Templars;
- it is the *Hylē* of the Gnostics;
- It is the double tail of serpent which forms the legs of the solar cock of the Abraxas;
- Finally, it is the Devil of Eudes de Mirville. But in very fact it is the blind force which souls have to conquer to liberate themselves from the bonds of the earth; for if their will does not free them from this *fatal attraction*, they will be absorbed in the current by the force which has produced them, and *will return to the central and eternal fire*.

This last kabbalistic figure of speech, notwithstanding its strange phraseology, is precisely the one used by Jesus; and in his mind it could have had no other significance than the one attributed to it by the Gnostics and the Kabbalists. Later the Christian theologians interpreted it differently, and with them it became the doctrine

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<sup>1</sup> [Éliphas Lévi Zahed, born Alphonse Louis Constant, 1810–1875, French esotericist, poet, and author of more than twenty books about magic, Kabbalah, alchemical studies, and Occultism. Considered the most influential occultist of the nineteenth century, he pursued an ecclesiastical career in the Catholic Church until, after great personal struggle, at the age of 26, he abandoned the Roman Catholic priesthood. At the age of 40 he started to profess a knowledge of the occult, also becoming a reputed ceremonial magician.]

of Hell. Literally, though, it simply means what it says — the astral light, or the generator and destroyer of all forms. Continues Lévi:

All the magical operations consist in freeing one's self from the coils of the Ancient Serpent; then to place the foot on its head, and lead it according to the operator's will. "I will give unto thee," says the Serpent, in the Gospel myth, "all the kingdoms of the earth, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The initiate should reply to him,

"I will not fall down, but thou shalt crouch at my feet; thou wilt give me nothing, but I will make use of thee and take whatever I wish. For *I am thy Lord and Master!*"

This is the real meaning of the ambiguous response made by Jesus to the tempter . . . Thus, the Devil is not an Entity. It is an errant force, as the name signifies.<sup>1</sup> An *odic or magnetic current* formed by a chain [a circle] of pernicious wills must create this evil spirit which the Gospel calls *legion*, and which forces into the sea a herd of swine — another evangelical allegory showing how base natures can be driven headlong by the blind forces set in motion by error and sin.<sup>2</sup>

In his extensive work on the mystical manifestations of human nature, the German naturalist and philosopher, Maximilian Perty,<sup>3</sup> has devoted a whole chapter to the *Modern forms of Magic*. He says in his Preface:

The manifestations of magical life partially repose on quite another order of things than the nature in which we are acquainted with time, space, and causality; these manifestations can be experimented with but little; they cannot be called out at our bidding, but may be observed [139] and carefully followed whenever they occur in our presence; we can only group them by analogy under certain divisions, and deduce from them general principles and laws.

**When a man, through the complete subjugation of matter, has attained that state of purification at which the spirit becomes nearly freed from its prison, he has become a creative force on earth, and can command the elements and powers of nature.**

Thus, for Professor Perty, who evidently belongs to the school of Schopenhauer, the possibility and *naturalness* of the phenomena which took place in the presence of Govinda Svāmin, the fakir, and are described by Louis Jaccoliot, the Orientalist,<sup>4</sup> are fully demonstrated on that principle. The fakir was a man who, through the entire subjugation of the matter of his corporeal system, has attained to that state of purifi-

<sup>1</sup> [Consult "Evil is the infernal end of the polarity of spirit-matter," in our Black versus White Magic Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>2</sup> Éliphas Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, Vol. II, ch. vi. [Louis Jaccoliot, 1837–1890, was a French barrister, colonial judge, author and lecturer.]

<sup>3</sup> [Josef Anton Maximilian Perty, 1804–1884, German naturalist, entomologist, and professor of zoology and comparative anatomy at the University of Bern.]

<sup>4</sup> [*Le Spiritisme dans le monde*, pp. 279 et seq.]



cation at which the spirit becomes nearly freed from its prison,<sup>1</sup> and can produce wonders. His *will*, nay, a simple desire of his, has become creative force, and he can command the elements and powers of nature. His body is no more an impediment to him; hence he can converse “spirit to spirit, breath to breath.” Under his extended palms, a seed, unknown to him (for Jaccoliot has chosen it at random among a variety of seeds, from a bag, and planted it himself, after *marking* it in a flower pot), will germinate instantly, and push its way through the soil.<sup>2</sup> Developing in less than two hours’ time to a size and height which, perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, would require several days or weeks, it grows miraculously under the very eyes of the perplexed experimenter, and mockingly upsets every accepted formula in Botany. Is this a miracle?<sup>3</sup> By no means; it may be one, perhaps, if we take Webster’s definition, that a miracle is:

. . . every event contrary to the *established* constitution and course of things, or a deviation from the *known* laws of nature.

**Purified from the contact with matter, the powerful will and spirit of the fakir condenses the essence of plant life into its germ, and forces it to maturity ahead of its time. For will in motion is force, and force produces matter.**

But are our naturalists prepared to support the claim that what they have once *established* on observation is infallible? Or that *every* law of nature is known to them? In this instance, the “miracle” is but a little *more* prominent than the now well known experiments of General Pleasanton, of Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup> While the vegetation and fruitage of his vines were stimulated to an incredible activity by the artificial violet light, the magnetic fluid emanating from the hands of the fakir effected still more intense and rapid changes in the vital function of the Indian plants. It attracted and concentrated the *ākāśa*, or life-principle, on the germ.<sup>5</sup> His magnetism, obeying his will, [140] drew up the *ākāśa* in a concentrated current through the plant towards his hands, and by keeping up an unintermitted flow for the requisite space of time, the life-

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<sup>1</sup> Plato hints at a ceremony used in the Mysteries, during the performance of which the neophyte was taught that men are *in this life* in a kind of prison, and taught *how to escape from it temporarily*. As usual, the too-learned translators disfigured this passage, partially because they *could* not understand it, and partially because they *would not*. See *Phædo*, 62-b, and commentaries on it by Henry More, the well-known Mystic philosopher and Platonist.

<sup>2</sup> [Jaccoliot, *op. cit.*, p. 311]

<sup>3</sup> [Consult “Miracles are natural phenomena,” in our Down to Earth Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>4</sup> [Augustus James Pleasanton, 1808–1894, a militia general during the American Civil War. He wrote *The Influence of the Blue Ray of the Sunlight and of the Blue Color of the Sky*, published in 1876.]

<sup>5</sup> The *ākāśa* is a Sanskrit word which means sky, but it also designates the imponderable and intangible life-principle — the astral and celestial lights combined together, and which two form the *anima mundi*, and constitute the soul and spirit of man; the celestial light forming his *νοῦς*, *πνεῦμα*, or divine spirit, and the other his *ψυχή*, soul or *astral* spirit. The grosser particles of the latter enter into the fabrication of his outward form — the body. *Ākāśa* is the mysterious fluid termed by scholastic science, “the all-pervading ether”; it enters into all the magical operations of nature, and produces mesmeric, magnetic, and spiritual phenomena. As, in Syria, Palestine, and India, meant the sky, *life*, and the *sun*, at the same time; the sun being considered by the ancient sages as the great magnetic well of our universe. The softened pronunciation of this word was *Ah* — says Dunlap [*Vestiges, etc.*, p. 72], for “the *s* continually softens to *h* from Greece to Calcutta.” *Ah* is lah, Ao, and Iaō. God tells Moses that his name is “I am” (*Ahiah*), a reduplication of Ah or Iah. The word “As,” Ah, or Iah means *life*, *existence*, and is evidently the root of the word *ākāśa*, which in Hindustan is pronounced *āhāśa*, the life-principle, or Divine life-giving fluid or medium. It is the Hebrew *rūah*, and means the “wind,” the breath, *the air in motion*, or “moving spirit,” according to Parkhurst’s *Lexicon*; and is identical with the spirit of God *moving* on the face of the waters.

principle of the plant built up cell after cell, layer after layer, with preternatural activity, until the work was done. The life-principle is but a blind force obeying a controlling influence. In the ordinary course of nature the plant protoplasm would have concentrated and directed it at a certain established rate. This rate would have been controlled by the prevalent atmospheric conditions; its growth being rapid or slow, and, in stalk or head, in proportion to the amount of light, heat, and moisture of the season. But the fakir, coming to the help of nature with his powerful will and spirit purified from the contact with matter,<sup>1</sup> condenses, so to speak, the essence of plant life into its germ, and forces it to maturity ahead of its time. This blind force being totally submissive to his will, obeys it with servility. If he chose to *imagine* the plant as a monster, it would as surely become such, as ordinarily it would grow in its natural shape; for the concrete image — slave to the subjective model outlined in the imagination of the fakir — is forced to follow the original in its least detail, as the hand and brush of the painter follow the image which they copy from his mind. The will of the fakir-conjurer forms an invisible but yet, to it, perfectly objective matrix, in which the vegetable matter is caused to deposit itself and assume the fixed shape. The will creates; for the will in motion is *force*, and force produces *matter*. [141]

## The spirit of man is like that of his Creator, omniscient in its essence.

If some persons object to the explanation on the ground that the fakir could by no means create the model in his imagination, since he was kept ignorant by Jaccoliot of the kind of seed he had selected for the experiment; to these we will answer that the spirit of man is like that of his Creator — omniscient in its essence. While in his natural state the fakir did *not*, and *could not* know whether it was a melon seed, or seed of any other plant; once entranced, *i.e.*, bodily dead to all outward appearance — the spirit, for which there exist neither distance, material obstacle, nor space of time, experienced no difficulty in perceiving the melon seed, whether as it lay deeply buried in the mud of the flower pot, or reflected in the faithful picture gallery of Jaccoliot's brain. Our visions, portents, and other psychological phenomena, all of which exist in nature, are corroborative of the above fact.

**Strolling Indian jugglers are neither pure in their modes of living, nor holy. They are generally feared and despised by the natives, for they are practitioners of the black art.**

And now, perhaps, we might as well meet at once another impending objection. Indian *jugglers*, they will tell us, do the same, and as well as the fakir, if we can believe newspapers and travellers' narratives. Undoubtedly so; and moreover these strolling jugglers are neither pure in their modes of living nor considered holy by any one; neither by foreigners, nor their own people. *They are generally FEARED and despised by*

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<sup>1</sup> Bear in mind that Govinda Svāmin made Jaccoliot swear that he would neither approach nor *touch* him during the time he was entranced. The least contact with *matter* would have paralyzed the action of the freed spirit, which, if we are permitted to use such an unpoetical comparison, would re-enter its dwelling like a frightened snail, drawing in its horns at the approach of any foreign substance. In some cases such a *brusque* interruption and oozing back of the spirit (sometimes it may suddenly and altogether break the delicate thread connecting it with the body) kills the entranced *subject*. See the several works of Baron du Potet and Puysegur on this question.

*the natives*, for they are *sorcerers*; men practising the *black art*. While such a holy man as Govinda Svāmin requires but the help of his own divine soul, closely united with the astral spirit, and the help of a few familiar *pitris* — pure, ethereal beings, who rally around their elect brother in flesh — the sorcerer can summon to his help but that class of spirits which we know as the elementals.<sup>1</sup> Like attracts like; and greed for money, impure purposes, and selfish views, cannot attract any other spirits than those that the Hebrew Kabbalists know as the *klippoth*, dwellers of *Asiah*, the fourth world, and the Eastern magicians as the *afrits*, or elementary spirits of terror, or the *daēvas*.

This is how an English paper describes the astounding *trick* of plant growth, as performed by Indian *jugglers*:

An empty flower pot was now placed upon the floor by the juggler, who requested that his comrades might be allowed to bring up some garden mould from the little plot of ground below. Permission being accorded, the man went, and in two minutes returned with a small quantity of fresh earth tied up in a corner of his chuddar, which was deposited in the flower pot and lightly pressed down. Taking from his basket a dry mango stone, and handing it round to the company that they might examine it, and satisfy themselves that it was really what it seemed to be, the juggler scooped out a little earth from the centre of the flower pot and placed the stone in the cavity. He then turned the earth lightly over it, and, having poured a little water over the surface, shut the flower pot out [142] of view by means of a sheet thrown over a small triangle. And now, amid a full chorus of voices and rat-tat-tat accompaniment of the tabor, the stone germinated; presently, a section of the cloth was drawn aside, and gave to view the tender shoot, characterized by two long leaves of a blackish-brown colour. The cloth was readjusted, and the incantation resumed. Not long was it, however, before the cloth was a second time drawn aside, and it was then seen that the two first leaves had given place to several green ones, and that the plant now stood nine or ten inches high. A third time, and the foliage was much thicker, the sapling being about thirteen to fourteen inches in height. A fourth time, and the little miniature tree, now about eighteen inches in height, had ten or twelve mangoes about the size of walnuts hanging about its branches. Finally, after the lapse of three or four minutes, the cloth was altogether removed, and the fruit, having the perfection of size, though not of maturity, was plucked and handed to the spectators, and, on being tasted, was found to be approaching ripeness, being sweetly acid.

We may add to this that we have witnessed the same experiment in India and Thibet, and that more than once we provided the flower pot ourselves, by emptying an old tin box of some Liebig extracts.<sup>2</sup> We filled it with earth with our own hands, and planted in it a small root handed to us by the conjurer, and until the experiment was ended

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<sup>1</sup> [Consult “Blavatsky on Elementals and Elementaries,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>2</sup> [Cf. Liebig’s Extract of Meat Company, established in the United Kingdom, was the producer of LEMCO brand Liebig’s Extract of Meat and the originator of Oxo meat extracts and Oxo beef stock cubes. It was named after Baron Justus von Liebig, the 19<sup>th</sup> century German organic chemist who developed and promoted a method for industrial production of beef extract.]



BLACK VERSUS WHITE MAGIC SERIES  
LIFE-PRINCIPLE IS A BLIND FORCE OBEYING A CONTROLLING INFLUENCE

never once removed our eyes from the pot, which was placed *in our own room*. The result was invariably the same as above described. Does the reader imagine that any prestidigitator could produce the same manifestation under the same conditions?





## Psychological versus conjuring tricks.

First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. VII (37), September 1890, pp. 55-61. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (QUERIES AND ANSWERS) XII pp. 321-29.

**W**E ARE ASKED BY A SUBSCRIBER in America to “comment” upon a curious report in the *Chicago Tribune*, which he sends us. We do so the more willingly as it contains a very ingenuous, newly invented “dodge” to detect the real nature of the “mango tree growing,” “boy and basket” performance, and other like phenomena produced by Indian “jugglers,” and an alleged “scientific” explanation of the same. The latter, however, is as old as the hills, and known to every Occultist, and has never been made a secret of. The heading of the article “IT IS ONLY HYPNOTISM” — (is it *only that?*) — pretends to let the cat out of the bag, and the “Chicagoan” interviewer seems very proud of this achievement of his countryman. But, to facts; let us see:

“HOW INDIAN FAKIRS DECEIVE THOSE WHO WATCH THEM.”

Fred S. Ellmore, a Young Chicagoan, Demonstrates the Truth of His Theory at Gaya, India — Mango Trees, Babies, and Other Objects Created by the Fakir Shown to Be Creatures of the Imagination — How a Clever Scheme Was Worked.

Nearly every traveller who comes back from India brings with him more or less marvellous stories of the performance of Indian fakirs or jugglers. No one ever heard of one of these tales without being curious to know the explanation of the mystery. All sorts of theories have been offered, all of which are more or less unsatisfactory. It has remained for a young Chicagoan to furnish an explanation that explains, and to present what must be accepted as absolute proof of the correctness of his idea. His discovery may attract attention in all parts of the world and he may become as widely known as the discoverer of electricity.

Well, he might, no doubt, but for two trifling facts:

- 1 If what he has discovered had not been known in the East, for ages, by the Occultists as GUPTA MAYA or “Secret Illusion”; and
- 2 Had not the Theosophical Society existed for over fifteen years to tell the “Ellmore” tale to every *gobe-mouche*<sup>1</sup> inclined to believe in the *miraculous and* [322] *supernatural* character of Indian, so-called “jugglery.”

It is over ten years ago that all such phenomena — the more wondrous and phenomenal for being simply *scientific* and explicable on *natural* principles — were repeatedly characterized by the present writer, when at Simla, as “psychological tricks,” to the great disgust of her over-enthusiastic friends. What these *psychological tricks* are in

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<sup>1</sup> [a credulous person]

reality and the difference between them and “conjuring” will be explained further on. And now to the *Tribune* narrative. After stating every particular about Mr. Frederick S. Ellmore, describing his childhood, and college life, giving the colour of his hair and the address and number of his family residence, the interviewer shows him, with a friend and classmate, Mr. George Lessing — one “an enthusiastic photographer” the other a clever artist and draughtsman — in the land of the Sacred Cow and the wily *fakir*.<sup>1</sup>

In talking to a *Tribune* man of his remarkable experience in India, Mr. Ellmore said:

“We had done West India pretty thoroughly and had spent some time in Calcutta. From there we went North, stopping for a short time at Rajmahal and Dinapur. From the latter city we went South to Gaya, which we reached in July last. Lessing and I had frequently talked over the Indian fakirs and their marvellous performances and had determined upon making a careful test of their powers. So we were constantly on the alert for some first class juggler. One afternoon Lessing rushed into the room where I was taking a snooze and told me there was a fakir in front about ready to begin his performances. I was as pleased as he. Neither of us had been able previous to this time to see one of these fellows, but we had arranged a little plan which we were to put into operation when opportunity offered. I had been impressed by a theory that the explanation of all their alleged supernatural performances would be found in hypnotism, but I did not know how to get at it, until Lessing proposed this plan to test my theory. While the fakir was going through his performances Lessing was to make a rapid pencil sketch of what he saw while I at the same moment would take a snapshot with my Kodak.

“Being prepared to put this plan into operation we went out from our abode, and there found the fakir and a crowd of natives and one or two Europeans. The fakir was a queer looking chap. His hair was long and matted, and his beard hung low on his breast. His only decoration was a copper ring or bracelet worn about his right arm between the wrist and the elbow. His eyes were remarkable both for their brilliancy [323] and their intense depth, if I may so term it. They seemed to be almost jet black and were set unusually deep in his head. When we stepped into the little circle about him those eyes took us in from sole to crown. He had spread upon the ground a coarse carpet of peculiar texture, about four feet wide and six feet long. At his right stood a small earthen bowl, and across his knees lay a strange looking musical instrument.

“Having received the signal that all was ready he took the bowl in his hands and turned the contents — a reddish, sand-like mixture — out upon the carpet. He mixed it about with his fingers, apparently to show that it contained no concealed objects. Replacing the sand in the bowl he stood it in the centre of the carpet, several feet in front of his knees, and covered it with a small shawl, first placing in the mixture several seeds of the mango fruit. Then he played a weird

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<sup>1</sup> [Generally speaking, Fakir is a Muslim ascetic; Yogi, a Hindu. But *yogi* is a very elastic word. See *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, [REPLY TO PERTINENT QUESTIONS] IV, p. 543. — ED. PHIL.]

air on his pipe, swayed back and forth, and as he did so, slowly took in each member of the crowd of the spectators with those marvellous eyes of his. The swaying and pipe playing lasted two or three minutes. Then he suddenly stopped and raised one corner of the shawl. We saw several green shoots two or three inches high. He replaced the shawl, played a little more on his pipe, and I could have sworn I saw the shawl pushed three feet into the air. Again he stopped and removed the shawl. This time there was a perfect tree, two feet or more in height, with long slender flat leaves. Lessing nudged me and I took my picture while he made a skeleton sketch. While we were watching this creation of the queer old man, it seemed to vanish before our eyes. When it was gone he removed the bowl and spread the shawl on the ground before him. Then there was more music and more swaying, more looking at the ground, and as we watched the dirty square of cloth he had placed on the ground we saw outlined beneath it some moving object. As we watched he grasped the shawl by each of two corners and snatched it from the ground. Upon the spot where it had rested but a moment before, there sat the queerest dimpled Indian baby that I had seen in my travels. Lessing kept his nerve better than I did. I would have forgotten what I was doing if he had not reminded me. I took the picture and he made his sketch. The baby remained but a moment, before Mr. Fakir recovered it with the shawl, and drawing a knife cut and slashed at the spot where the infant sat. In another instant he threw away the shawl and there was nothing there.

“We had scarce time to recover from our astonishment when the fakir drew from under his knee a ball of grey twine. Taking the loose end between his teeth, he, with a quick upward motion, tossed the ball into the air. Instead of coming back to him it kept on going up and up until out of sight, and there remained only the long swaying end. [324] When we looked down after trying to see where the ball had gone, we were all astonished to see standing beside the fakir a boy about six years old. He had not been there when the ball was tossed into the air, but he was there now, and at a word from the fakir he walked over to the twine and began climbing it, a good deal after the fashion of a monkey climbing a grape vine. As he was starting I got his range and made a picture of him, Lessing at the same time making a sketch. The boy disappeared when he had reached a point thirty or forty feet from the ground, at least we could not see him. A moment later the twine disappeared. Then the fakir arose, rolled up his carpet, took the bowl away, and passed among the crowd soliciting contributions.

“I had no facilities for developing the Kodak films, and it was these Lessing took with him, as well as a thousand or more other negatives, to be developed. The fakir pictures with a few others, I received this afternoon. After the fakir’s departure Lessing filled in his sketches and these he left with me. You’ll see by comparing the ones Lessing made with the photographs that in no instance did the camera record the marvellous features of the performance. For instance, Lessing’s sketch shows the tree grown from the bush, while the camera shows there was no bush there. Lessing saw a baby, and so did I, and he has got it in his sketch, but the camera demonstrates that there was no baby. Lessing’s

sketch of the body climbing the twine is evidence that he saw it, but the camera says there was no boy and no twine. From which I'm compelled to believe that my theory is absolutely correct — that Mr. Fakir had simply hypnotized the entire crowd, but couldn't hypnotize the camera. I'm going to write an history of the affair and have copies made of the pictures and forward them to the London Society for Psychical Research. I have no doubt it will make good use of them."

**The only explanation given by the Society for Psychical Research for these phenomena is it does not understand, and is incapable of understanding, what is going on.**

Nor have *we* any doubt, upon this. The "S.P.R." is sure to make "as good use" of the sketches, by Mr. Lessing, and the photographic pictures by Mr. Ellmore, as it has made of the hundreds of its séances with spiritual mediums, and the evidence furnished by the Theosophist: unable to trace the things to its much beloved "telepathic impact," it will brand the whole round of the above enumerated well known "juggler" phenomena as prestidigitation, sleight of hand and conjuring tricks *à la* "Maskelyne and Cooke."<sup>1</sup> For this is usually the only explanation given by the "learned" Society, of all that it does not understand and is incapable of understanding. [325]

We wish Messrs. Ellmore and Lessing joy, and must say a few words on the subject, for their further and personal benefit.

**Fakir is a Mussulman devotee whose whole time is taken up by acts of holiness such as standing for days on one leg, or on the top of his head. But the saintly Hindu Yogi does not take "collections" after the exhibition of his psychic powers. The man Ellmore and Lessing saw was a public juggler, known in India as Jadoowalla or sorcerer.**

First of all we ask them why they call the "juggler" a "fakir"? If he is the one he cannot be the other; for a fakir is simply a *Mussulman Devotee* whose whole time is taken up by acts of holiness such as standing for days on one leg, or on the top of his head, and who pays no attention to any other phenomena. Nor could their "juggler" be a Yogi, the latter title being incompatible with "taking up collections" after the exhibition of his psychic powers. The man they saw then at Gaya was simply — as they very correctly state — a public juggler, or as he is generally called in India, a *jadoowalla* (sorcerer) and a "producer of *illusions*," whether Hindu or Mohammedan. As a genuine juggler, *i.e.*, one who makes us professions of showing the supernatural phenomena or *Siddhis* of a Yogi, he would be quite as entitled to the use of conjuring tricks as a Hoffman or Maskelyne and Cooke. Well, the latter gentlemen, and all the "Wizards of the North" as well, are invited to repeat if they can, even such *juggling phenomena* as the above, clad, or rather *unclad*, as such jugglers are, and under the canopy of the heavens, instead of the roof and ceiling of a hall or a theatre. *They will never be able to do so. And why?*

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<sup>1</sup> [John Nevil Maskelyne, 1839–1917, English stage magician and inventor of the pay toilet, along with other Victorian era devices. He worked with magicians George Alfred Cooke and David Devant, and many of his illusions are still performed today. His book *Sharps and Flats: A Complete Revelation of the Secrets of Cheating at Games of Chance and Skill* is considered a classic overview of card sharp practices. In 1914 he founded the Occult Committee, a group whose remit was to "investigate claims to supernatural power and to expose fraud."]



## Public jugglers are not sleight of hand conjurers, they are mesmerisers endowed with phenomenal powers.

Because these “jugglers” are not sleight of hand conjurers. They are regular and genuine psychologists, mesmerisers endowed with the most phenomenal powers, hitherto unknown to, and quite unpractised in Europe, save in a few exceptional cases.

And with regard to this point, basing our questions of the logic of analogy, *if such phenomenal powers of fascination, as throwing glamour over audiences often numbering several hundreds and even thousands, are once proven to exist in simple professional jugglers, who can deny the same powers, only twenty times as strong, in trained adepts in Occultism?*

This is the future nut for the Society for Psychological Research to crack — if it ever accepts Mr. Ellmore’s testimony, which we doubt. But if it is accepted, what right will its members or the public have to doubt the claims made on behalf of great Yogis and learned adepts and [326] “Mahatmas” to produce far more wonderful phenomena? The fact alone forsooth, that a whole audience sees a twine thrown into the air,<sup>1</sup> the end of which seems fastened in the clouds, a boy climbing up it, a baby under a basket, and a mango tree growing, when there is, in truth, neither twine nor boy, neither baby nor mango tree — may well give us the right to call it the greatest mental miracle possible; a “psychological *trick*” — true enough, but one never to be rivalled, nor even approached by a physical phenomenon, however astounding. “It is *only* Hypnotism,” you say.

### Between hypnotism and Mesmerism lies an impassable chasm.

Then those who say so, do not know the difference between hypnotism, which, at best, is only *a purely physiological manifestation* even in the hands of the most powerful and learned experimenters, and real Mesmerism, let alone *mahāmāyā* or even the *guptamāyā* of ancient and modern India. We defy all, and everyone, from Charcot and Richet down to all the second rate hypnotizers, including the greatest physical mediums, to produce that with which Messrs. Ellmore and Lessing credit their “juggler.”

### Glamour and fascination are entirely different from hypnotism.

To those who are incapable of appreciating the all-importance of that psychospiritual power in man which the *Tribune* calls so ignorantly and so foolishly “hypnotism,” all we may say would be useless. We simply refuse to answer them. As to those others who will understand us, we say *yes*; it is *glamour*, fascination, psychology, call it what you will, but it is not “hypnotism.” The latter is an aberration produced on several persons in turn by another person, through contact, through gazing at a bright spot or manipulation; but what is it in comparison with the collective and instantaneous *fascination* produced on hundreds by one passing gaze of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra.*

“juggler,”<sup>1</sup> even though the gaze did “take in every man” “from sole to crown.” No Theosophist who understands anything of Occultism, has ever explained such phenomena on any principle but that of *magic spell and fascination*; and to claim for them anything else would amount to teaching *supernaturalism* and miracle, *i.e.*, an impossibility in nature. There [327] is a host of Theosophists in England alone, who would testify any day that they have been taught for many years now that physical phenomena in India are due to glamour and the psychological powers of the performers. Yet no one in the Theosophical Society ever thought of claiming for himself the discovery and explanation of the mango tree mystery, as it is a teaching known for long ages, and now once more taught to all *who want to know*.

Nevertheless, as said at the beginning of this article, we all owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Ellmore and his friend, for their clever idea of applying to these tricks, the photographic test; as, no glamour (or, as the reporter makes Ellmore say, “hypnotism”) could affect the camera. Moreover, both the young traveller and the *Tribune* reporter seem to have worked only for the Theosophical Society. Indeed, it is safe to prophesy that no one, including the Society for Psychical Research, will pay much attention to Mr. Ellmore’s “discovery” — since the latter, the erroneous name of hypnotism notwithstanding, is only a fact and a truth. Thus, it is the Theosophical Society alone which will benefit by having one more of its teachings corroborated by independent and undeniable evidence.<sup>2</sup> [328]

**Occultism does not admit claims of bodily disintegration, for a living creature, whether man or mosquito, cannot be “disintegrated” and live.**

[Explaining, in answer to a query, certain phenomena of clairvoyance in the condition of sleep, H.P. Blavatsky stresses the following points:]

This . . . reminds one of the old Spiritualistic claim that a medium’s body *may be disintegrated* by the Spirits and carried by them through walls to any distance, and re-materialized as easily. Mrs. Marshall, we are asked to believe, was so disintegrated, and carried three miles off from her bedroom and *rebuilt* and dropped on a table of a dark *séance* room. Occultism, however, denies such possibility. It teaches that no living creature, man or mosquito, can be so disintegrated and live. This may be done with flowers and minerals, plants and other things which may be made to pass through “solid” roofs and walls; but no living man or being can be dealt with in such fashion without death ensuing. This is what Occultism, backed by logic and common sense, teaches us, for it admits no such thing as a supernatural miracle. Nor has the “umbilical cord” anything to do with “Soul,” *but only with the astral body* (the “Double”) whenever the latter is projected outside the body. . . . The image of his friend,

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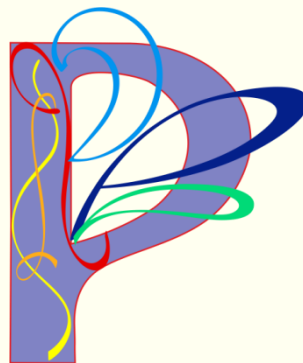
<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra*.

<sup>2</sup> Additional corroboration of occult teaching is given in a pamphlet entitled *Materialism, Agnosticism, and Theosophy*, issued by the Pacific Coast Committee for Theosophical Works:

“In connection with this very point (*i.e.*, *nebulæ*), some three years ago, Madame Blavatsky, that *bête noire* of both religion and science, declared that if scientists could perfect instruments sufficiently powerful to penetrate these *nebulæ*, they would perceive the falsity of this assumption of the universal action of gravitation. It passed without notice.

. . . But quite recently a California scientist has most unexpectedly confirmed this seemingly idle statement. One of the first results of the inspection of the heavens through the great Lick telescope was the cautious announcement by Professor Holden that the arrangement of matter of the *nebulæ* would seem to point directly to the conclusion that some other force than gravitation was the active agent.”

the Seer, was of course projected upon his brain and *through* his mind; but as the latter was his *lower* physical mind (*Kāma-manas*) so the “projector” was his higher, or Spiritual mind (*Manas* proper). There is no need, indeed, of any “Spiritual attendant,” man having always in him his own attendant, the reincarnating Higher *Ego*. Notwithstanding the pitying fling at him by his friend, the “Seer,” who denies him any clairvoyance, the “Dreamer” must undeniably be a clairvoyant, to have seen, as he did, so vividly and so correctly, his “Frater G.” The vision is very easily explained. He fell asleep thinking of his friend whom he had never seen in body, *willing* to see him, and thus passing immediately from the waking to the dreaming state. What wonder then, that his will stirred to powerful action by strong desire, his *human* mind (the lower *Manas*) being paralyzed, moreover, by the sudden sleep of the body, acted through the divine and omniscient “Seer” instead of doing so through his uncertain, human principle of thought, which confuses and throws into confusion all it sees in sleep, [329] upon awakening? “Kshetrajña” (our Higher Ego),<sup>1</sup> says Indian philosophy, is the embodied Spirit, that which knows all and informs at times our Kshetra (the mortal body). The case of the “Dreamer” was one of such special cases. He saw *through* and *with* the spiritual, all-seeing eye of his divine Ego. Impressing the sight upon its human, sleeping, and therefore plastic and passive mind and memory, the latter remembered what the Ego had seen upon awakening. This is quite natural and no *miracle* is involved.



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<sup>1</sup> [Consult “Higher Manas and Lower Manas” and “Higher Self and Higher Ego,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

## Suggested reading for students.



### On Black versus White Magic.

- "A Strange Story by Bulwer-Lytton"
- "Adoration of male gods led to phallicism and black magic"
- "Akhund Abdul Ghaffur of Swat"
- "Ancient Magic in Modern Science"
- "Animated statues, trophies of the Black Art"
- "Auras of mediums and adepts"
- "Between Black and White Magic there is but a cobweb thread"
- "Black Magic is in full sway amidst mankind"
- "Black versus White Magic, the two Opposing Powers"
- "Blavatsky on the author of Phallicism"
- "Blavatsky on the malignant fever of unsound scepticism"
- "Buddhist Feminism in Ceylon"
- "Capital punishment is a relic of Jewish barbarity"
- "Christian Lectures on Buddhism"
- "Christianity has retarded the Woman's progress"
- "Confessions of Cyprianus, the Penitent Sorcerer of Antioch"
- "Does your mind elate with self-adoration"
- "Egyptian Magic, good and bad"
- "Evil is an illusion caused by the Circle of Necessity"
- "Evil is the infernal end of the polarity of spirit-matter"
- "Exact Science versus Archaic Philosophy"
- "Frightening crying children into silence"
- "How can a Black Magician be known"
- "Hugo's La Fin de Satan (1911)"
- "Hylo-Idealism is a fig leaf for Crass Materialism"



- “Insights to the high idealism and quaint wit of Eliphas Levi”
- “Insights to the Occult Arts”
- “Instead of Black and White Magic, read selfish and unselfish motive”
- “Magic is the Occult Knowledge of Natural Law”
- “Mediumship and Adeptship are poles apart”
- “No one has the right to control the mind of another”
- “Occultism and Kabbalah are only masks to hide the sacred truth from the profane”
- “On Astral Intoxication”
- “On malevolent bewitchments and venomous magic”
- “Ormuzd and Ahriman are ever opposing powers, yet inseparable and interdependent”
- “Papal dispensation for murder and mayhem”
- “Phallicism and Phallic Worship”
- “Presentiments of what lies in the bosom of future”
- “Reflections of an ardent apostle”
- “Religious conversion means absolute perversion”
- “Selfishness is the cause of all sin and suffering”
- “Selfishness is the hallmark of fakirs, hermits, and yogins”
- “Sin by cruel acquiescence in an unworthy fashion”
- “Soul-destroying sophistry is fake wisdom”
- “Spirit and Matter are dual aspects of One Cause”
- “Spiritual progress is not aided by watching the Astral Light”
- “Teraphim are the elemental spirits of ancient divination”
- “The Arabian Nights are echoes from of Lemuria and Atlantis”
- “The Astral Light reflects images of every thought and action”
- “The Ensouled Violin”
- “The Idyll of the White Lotus”
- “The Origin of Good and Evil”
- “The Original Sin is a Jewish Invention”
- “The Pernicious Sophistry of Hypocrisy”
- “The Pitfalls of Occult Arts and Metaphysical Healing”
- “The power of the magician is inversely related to his worldly interests”
- “The process of precipitating handwritten letters explained”

- “The Silent Brother”
- “The spiritual blindness of anthropomorphism”
- “The Theosophical Society’s position on hypnotism”
- “Theological anthropomorphism is the parent of materialism”
- “Theological malice is the root cause of Satanic Magic”
- “Trained imagination can produce occult phenomena”
- “True magic is the Gnosis of Pythagoras”
- “Warning to phenomena seekers”
- “When theological ethics speak no longer in man”
- “Why women should avoid the Church like a plague”
- “Yoga is a wolf in sheep’s clothing”



- “Akasha vs. Astral Light,” in our Secret Doctrine’s First Proposition Series.
- “Astral Light is a term very little understood,” in our Confusing Words Series.
- “Dazzled glimpses into the Astral Light,” in our Down to Earth Series.
- “Magnetism, Mesmerism, Hypnotism,” in our Confusing Words Series

