



From an Official Letter Written by Madame Blavatsky to the Convention of the American Societies held in Chicago in 1888

To WILLIAM Q. JUDGE, General Secretary of the American Section of the Theosophical Society:

My dearest Brother and Co-Founder of the Theosophical Society:

In addressing to you this letter, which I request you to read to the Convention summoned for April 22nd, I must first present my hearty congratulations and most cordial good wishes to the Society and to yourself — the heart and soul of that body in America. We were several to call it to life in 1875. Since then you have remained alone to preserve that life through good and evil report. It is to you chiefly if not entirely, that the Theosophical Society owes its existence in 1888. Let me thank you for it, for the first, and perhaps the last time publicly, and from the bottom of my heart, which beats only for the cause you represent so well and serve so faithfully. I ask you also to remember that on this important occasion, my voice is but the feeble echo of other more sacred voices, and the transmitter of the approval of Those whose presence is alive in more than one true Theosophical heart, and lives as I know, pre-eminently in yours.

Karma and Reincarnation

(Abstract of an Address by William Q. Judge)

THE doctrine of Karma cannot be considered properly without keeping Reincarnation in view, for Karma could not have its proper place and operation unless reincarnations furnished the material for it to show in. Reincarnation is, indeed, itself a part of, and is as well a cause of Karma, because the reincarnated man, struggling with fate, ignorance, and desires, generates constantly new causes that may result in further reincarnations.

The meaning of the word Karma must be inquired into. It really means *action*. It is the action of the Divine, or God, or the unmanifested, or Brahmâ, and also of every sentient being. All worlds are subject to it, as is declared in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, where it says: "All worlds up to that of Brahmâ are subject to Karma." Hence is it found operating in all planes. It is Karma that brought us here, that will take us to Devachan, and afterwards bring us out of that condition. For if Karma does not act superiorly to Devachan, then we could never emerge from the latter; but the moment "the reward is exhausted in the heavens of Indra" — which is a description of Devachan — Karma seizes upon the ego and draws it into another body, there to begin again the adjustment of the scales.

The wise among the ancients did not lose time in wandering about, lost in illogical doctrines of salvation and favor from a jealous god, but considered the problem presented by the vicissitudes of life, in the extraordinary fact that the just man often receives no reward nor the wicked one punishment. Finding an explanation needed, they hit upon the word Karma.

As one writer says:

FREEDOM

THE price of freedom sweet is living purely,
For souls are free that conquer snares of sense;
Unselfish deeds and thoughts are bringing surely
Again the Light—so long departed hence—
That wrapped the sea and sky in weirdest beauty
When bards and kings held sway o'er air and earth.
The wondrous keys of Selflessness, and Duty,
Awake in us the Gods who gave us birth.

—F. J. Dick

Karma when viewed thus is good or bad deeds of sentient beings, by the infallible influence or efficiency of which the said beings are met with due rewards or punishments according as they deserve, in any state of life. And we must remember that the world has no being, in the essential sense, but is subject to an alternating process of destruction and renovation.

This leads us to consider the erroneous views of some as to what Karma is. Some think it an evil influence that stands ready to strike a man at the first favorable moment, and I have met more of those who looked at it thus than as being also the good results and compensations of life. It cannot be properly called "the law of ethical causation" only, for if it applies "to all worlds up to Brahmâ," it must be more than this.

It is the great law which operates also through a manvantara, and which — considering a manvantara as a great Being made up of all beings included therein — causes each manvantara to be the exact resultant of the one which preceded it.

Nor should we make the error of applying it only to ourselves as a great whole, for it affects every atom in our bodies. As we are in fact made up of a *mass of lives*, our thoughts and acts affect these atoms or lives and impress them with a Karma of their own. This again rebounds on us as well as on all other atoms or lives.

Karma is a great benefactor, for it never fails to mete out all compensation, and that demands that the smallest good act or thought should bring what we call reward. Now as we have been reincarnated over and over again, we have met each other in previous lives. The laws of affinity and harmony require that those who are now together must have been with each other before. So the acts of charity and kindness we perform now will compel similar acts to be done for us in other lives; and the law is bringing about such in this life because we did those of like nature in another life. As *The Voice of the Silence* says: "Act thou for them today and they will act for thee tomorrow." So I believe that I am working now to help you, and you me, because there still exists a reciprocal obligation.

The causes of Reincarnation are desire and ignorance. We have what we term "will," but our will is moved into action by desire, and our acts spring from the desire to bring about pleasure or to avoid pain. As long as we are ignorant we constantly fix our desires upon enjoyment or the avoidance of pain, and thus lay the ground for the operation of Karma in another body.

In each life all previous Karma is not exhausted, because the desires and old meditations are not able to manifest themselves unless the apparatus or sort of body is provided which will permit the bringing up to the surface of the old impressions. This is clearly set forth in Patañjali's Yoga Philosophy.

Thus by means of inheritance of bodily frames of various sorts, the ego may exhaust by degrees its Karma, and this explains the differences in men. The man who has a great wide brain takes hold of old Karma which that apparatus may exhaust.

And at this point ignorance shows its power. As, ignorant of the law we sin against it, we receive the result, or, acting in accord with it, another result; in the one case sorrow, in the other, happiness. So we must beware, having become acquainted with the law, that we do not continue as trespassers, for in the present life we settle the opportunities for the next and determine whether we shall in that succeeding reincarnation have opportunity to live with good men, helped by them, or among the vile, ever pushed toward evil.

Of the more recondite mysteries of Reincarnation I will not speak, since those are more or less speculative, but will divide it thus:

- (a) Reincarnation in good surroundings and in a good body, and
- (b) Reincarnation in the opposite sort of body and in an evil family.

Karma as affecting us we may for the present analyse thus:

- (a) That sort which is now operating in our present life and body.
- (b) That which is held over and will operate in other lives or in a later period of this one.
- (c) That which we are making for other lives to come.

The fields in which Karma may operate are:

- (a) In the body only, or the mere circumstances of life;
- (b) In the mental plane when trials of the mind are felt;
- (c) In the psychical nature.

The spiritual plane is not affected by Karma at any time.

Karmic causes may interfere with each other and produce a result in our life which, while similar to neither cause, will be the proper resultant of both. It may also be exhausted by two opposite Karmic causes meeting each other and thus destroying the effect of each.

Its effect is also varied to our sight by the apparatus or body and mind through which it works, in this, that instead of such and such a Karmic cause producing an instantaneous result, it may be spread out over many years in a series of misfortunes, the sum total of which might in some other person appear in one single disaster or favorable turn of fortune.

Jesus of the Christians uses the words of occultism and describes Karma in this language:

Judge not that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge so shall ye be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again.

And in the words of Paul: "As ye sow so shall ye reap."

This is a restatement of the great law as declared by the ancients, and those great sages said that none other than ourselves forged the chains that bind us, and no other hand but our own smites us.

The road up which we must climb to rise above Karma and thus be able to help our fellow men with conscious power well directed, is that one which is marked with the signs Charity and Love.