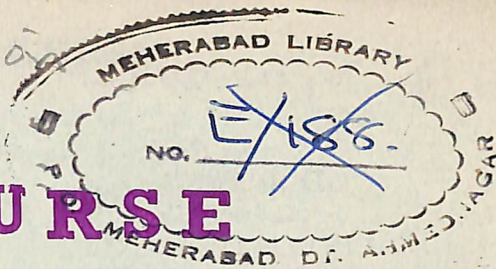


Reincarnation
& Karma



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Meher Baba

on

Reincarnation and Karma

Part I

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEATH

THE worldly man completely identifies life with the manifestations and activities of the gross body ; and for him, therefore, the beginning and the end of bodily existence, are also the beginning and the end of the individualised soul. All his experience seems to speak to him about the transitoriness of the physical body ; and he has often witnessed the disintegration of those physical bodies, which were once vibrant with life. So, he is naturally impelled to believe that life is conterminus with bodily existence.

The worldly man takes death to be the cessation of life itself, and he gives great importance to death, in his general outlook. There are few, who contemplate on death for prolonged periods ; but, in spite of the fact that most persons are completely engrossed in their worldly pursuits, they can hardly resist being impressed by the incident of death, when they

are occasionally confronted by it, in their lives. For most persons the earthly scene of life has as its background the inevitable and the irresistible fact of death, which imperceptibly enters into their greatest triumphs and achievements, as well as in their keenest pleasures and rejoicings.

Apart from giving a general background to the scene of life, death also assumes an accentuated and overwhelming importance, even among the multicoloured incidents of life.

**The Importance
given to Death**

Death is among the happenings, which are the most dreaded and the most lamented; it is also among the things, which people, in their malice or anger, try to inflict upon—each other as the last penalty or worst revenge,—or which they rely upon, as the surest way of removing the aggression or interference by others. People also invite death upon themselves in token of supreme self-sacrifice; and, at times, they seek it with the false hope of putting an end to all the worldly worries and problems, which they are unable to face or solve. Thus, *in the minds of most persons, death assumes an accentuated and overwhelming importance.*

The overwhelming importance of death is derived from man's attachment to *particular* forms; but death loses much of its sting and importance, even for the worldly man, if he takes a broader view of the course of life.

**The Persistence of
Life in General**

In spite of the transitoriness of forms, and, in fact, even in and through these forms, there is an unbroken continuity of life, discarding old forms and forging new ones for its habitation and expression. The recurring incident of death is matched by the recurring incident of birth; in spite of the unceasing activity of the hand of death, life continues to flourish; old generations are replaced by new ones; *life is reborn in new forms, incessantly renewing and refreshing itself*; the streams of life, with their ancient origin, are ever advancing onwards through the forms, which come and go like the waves of the ocean.

So, even within the limits of the experience of the worldly, there is much that should mitigate the morbid mood that spreads by falsely regarding death as an irreparable and unrelieved loss. *A sane attitude to death*

**Sorrow of Death
is due to Attachment
to Particular Forms**

is possible only if life is considered impersonally and without any attachment to particular forms; but this is the very thing which the worldly man finds it difficult to do, because of his entanglement with specific forms. For him, one form is not as good as another; the form, with which he identifies himself is by far the most important. The general preservation and advancement of the stream of life has for him no special interest; *what the worldly man craves for is a continuation of his own form and other particular forms, with which he has got entangled.* His heart cannot reconcile itself to his intellect; and, with the vanishing of the forms, which have been dear to him, he becomes a victim of unending sorrow, though life, as a whole, may have elsewhere replaced the lost forms with new ones.

The sorrow of death, on closer analysis, turns out to be rooted in selfishness. The person, who loses his beloved may intellectually know that life, as a whole, has elsewhere compensated for the loss; but his only feeling is,

**Sorrow of Death
is a Form of Selfish-
ness**

'What is that to me?' Death becomes a cause of unending sorrow, when a man looks at it from his own personal point of view; from the point of view of life in general, it is an episode of minor importance.

Impersonal considerations go a long way to fortify the mind against the personal sorrow caused by death; but they do not by themselves solve the wider problems which confound even the impersonal intellect of man, when

**Problems of the
Impersonal Intellect**

he considers some of the implications of death, as it comes to him, within the limits of his ordinary experience. If death is regarded as the final annihilation of individual existence, there seems to be an irreparable loss to the universe. Each individual may be in a

position to give to the universe something so unique that no one else can exactly replace it. Further, there are cases of *the cutting short of the earthly career, long before the attainment of perfection by the individual*; all his struggle towards the ideal, all his endeavour and enthusiasm for the great, the good and the beautiful, and all his aspiration for things divine and eternal, seem to end in the vast nothingness created by death.

The implications of assuming of death to be the termination of individual existence run counter to the ineradicable expectations based upon rationalised intuition; thus, *there usually arises a conflict between the claims*

**Conflict between
the Impure Intellect
and Deeper Intuition**

of intuition and the deliverance of the impure intellect, which assumes death to be the termination of individual existence. Such conflict is often a beginning of pure thinking, which begins by seriously challenging the usually accepted belief that death is the real termination of individual existence. Death as an extinction of life can never be wholly acceptable to the spiritual aspirations of man; and, therefore, the belief in the immortality of the individualised soul is often accepted by the human mind without much resistance, even in the absence of direct supersensible knowledge about the existence of life after death.

Those, who know the fact of the immortality of the soul, from personal experience, are few. *The supersensible knowledge about the existence of life after death is inaccessible to a vast majority of persons*; for them, immortality must remain just an agreeable and acceptable belief but nothing more. It becomes a part of *personal knowledge* for those, who through their scientific interest, have built up means of communication with the 'other world' or those, whose special circumstances, have invited in their personal experience, the appearance or intervention by the departed spirits, or those, who through their spiritual advancement, have automatically unfolded

certain latent perceptual capacities of the inner vehicles of consciousness.

Immortality of the individualised soul is rendered possible by the fact that the individualised soul is *not* the same as the physical body. The individualised soul continues to exist with all its *sanskaras* in the inner worlds through the medium of its mental and subtle bodies, even after it has discarded its gross body at the time of death. So, life through the medium of the gross body is only a *section* of the continuous life of the individualised soul; the other sections of its life have their expression in the other worlds.

The Material Basis of Immortality

Nature is much greater than what a man can perceive through the ordinary senses of his physical body. The hidden aspects of nature consist of finer matter and forces. There is no unbridgeable gulf separating the finer aspects of nature from its gross aspect.

Three Worlds

They all interpenetrate one another and exist together. The finer aspects of nature are not perceptible to ordinary man, but they are nevertheless continuous with the gross aspect, which is perceptible to him. They are not remote; and yet they are inaccessible to his consciousness. This is due to the fact that his consciousness is functioning through the physical senses, which are not adapted for perceiving those aspects of nature, which are finer than the gross aspect. Ordinary man is unconscious of the *inner planes*, just a deaf man is unconscious of sounds; and he cannot deal with them consciously. For all practical purposes, therefore, they are for him other 'worlds'. The finer and hidden part of nature has two important divisions, *viz.*, the subtle and the mental, corresponding to the subtle and mental bodies of man. The whole of nature might, therefore, be conveniently divided into three parts—(i) the *gross* world, (ii) the *subtle* world and (iii) the *mental* world. When the individualised soul has incarnated itself in a physical body, it expresses its life in the gross world; but when it drops

the outer sheath of the physical body, it continues to have its expression of life either in the subtle world through the subtle body, or in the mental world through the mental body.

Ordinarily life in the physical body, is terminated only when the sanskaras, which are released for expression in that incarnation, are all worked out. But, in some exceptional cases, soul has to give up its gross body

Effects of Untimely Death

before the working out of these sanskaras is completed. For example, the man who commits *suicide*, cuts short the period of his life artificially and thereby prevents the working out of those sanskaras, which were released for fructification. *When, due to untimely death, the sanskaras released for fructification are withheld from expression, the discarnate soul remains subject to the propelling force of these sanskaras, even after the physical body has been discarded.* The momentum of the sanskaras, which were prevented from being worked out, is retained even in life after death, with the result that the departed spirit desires the things of the gross world very badly.

In such cases, the discarnate soul experiences irresistible impulsion towards the gross world and the soul craves for the gross objects so badly, that it seeks gratification of its desires,

Obsessions

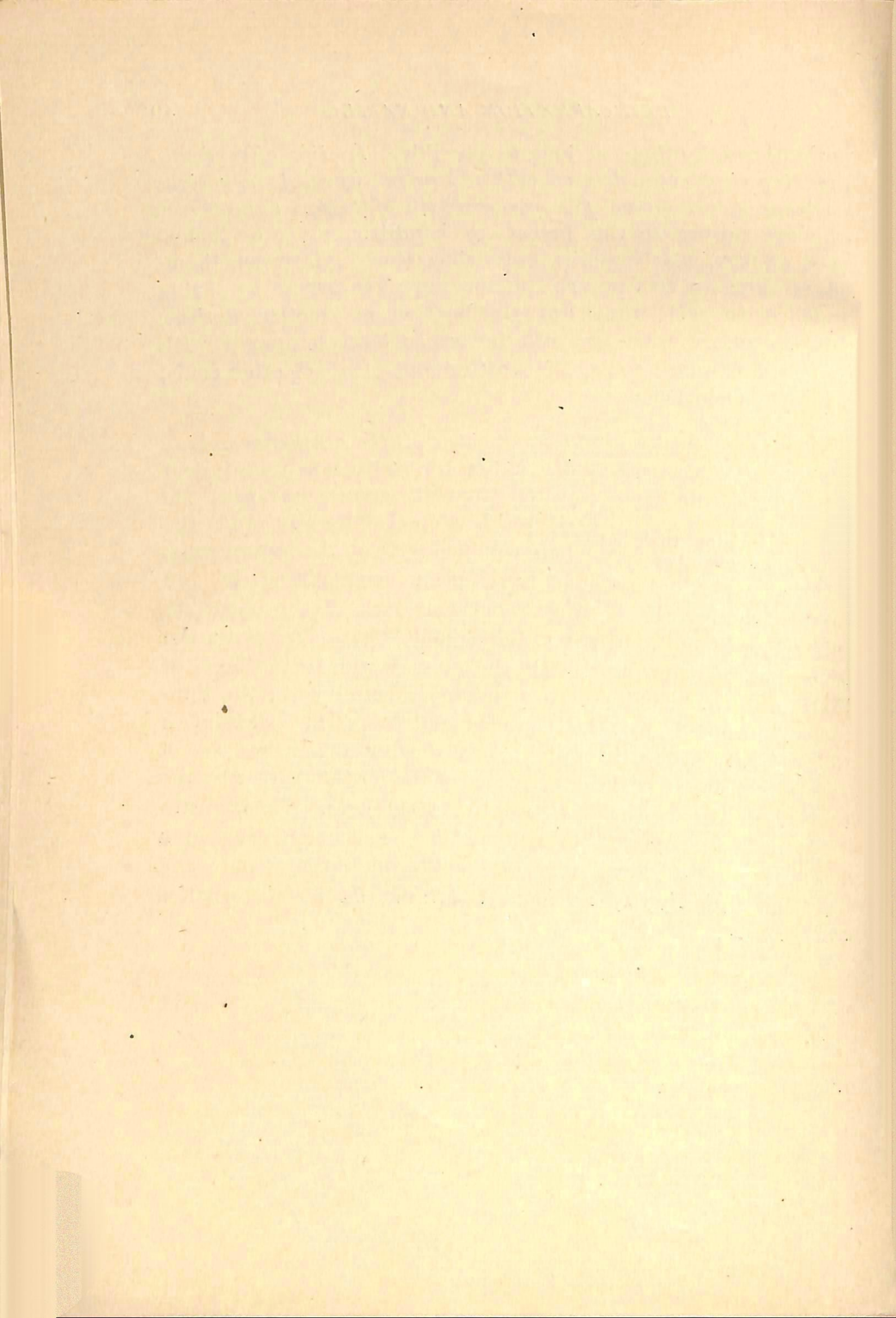
through the gross bodies of those souls, which are still incarnate. Thus the soul may want to drink wine so badly that it takes to unnatural methods of gratifying the craving. It awaits its opportunity. When it finds some person in the gross world in the process of drinking wine, it satisfies its own desire, *through* that person, by possessing his physical body and attaching himself to it. In the same way, if it wants to experience the gross manifestations of crude anger, it does so through a person, who, in the gross world, is feeling angry. Such souls are constantly *waiting to meet and obsess some incarnate persons of similar sanskaras*; and they try to maintain their contact with the gross

world through others as long as possible. *In life after death, any lingering entanglement with the gross world is a serious hindrance to the natural flow of onward life of the soul ;* and those, who are subject to this precarious condition must be looked upon as particularly unfortunate, since they invite upon themselves and others much unnecessary suffering by being impelled to seek unnatural gratification of coarser desires, through others who are still incarnate. As compared with these unfortunate souls, the posthumous of life of other souls, is much smoother.

In normal cases, *death occurs when all the sanskaras seeking fructification are worked out.* When the soul drops its physical body, it is completely severed from all connections with the gross world, though the ego and the mind are retained with all the impressions, which have been accumulated in the

**Death begins the
Interval between two
Lives**

earthly career. Unlike the exceptional cases of the obsessing spirits, ordinary spirits try to reconcile themselves with the severance of connection with the gross world to the best of their ability. They soon acquiesce themselves in the limitations imposed by the changed conditions and *sink into a state of subjectivity,* in which there begins a new process of mentally going over the experiences of the earthly career by the revival of the sanskaras connected with them. Thus, death inaugurates a period of comparative rest consisting in a temporary withdrawal from the gross sphere of action ; and it is *the beginning of an interval between the last incarnation and the next.*



Meher Baba

on

Reincarnation and Karma

Part II

HELL AND HEAVEN

AT the time of death, the soul drops its physical body. Therefore, after death, there is no consciousness of the gross world, since it is directly dependent on the physical body. But, though the consciousness of the gross world is thus lost, the impressions of the experiences of the gross

Subjectivity of Life after Death

world are retained in the mental body; and they continue to express themselves through the semi-subtle sphere. During the interval between death and the next incarnation, the consciousness of the soul is turned towards these impressions, with the result that there is a vivification of impressions and the revival of corresponding experiences. The average man does not become aware of the subtle *environment*. He is wrapped up in complete *subjectivity*; and he is *absorbed in living through the revived impressions*.

In life after death, the experiences of pain and pleasure become much more intense than what they were in the earthly

life. And these subjective states of intensified suffering and joy are respectively called hell and heaven.

**Hell and Heaven
are States of the
Mind**

Hell and heaven are states of the mind; they should not be looked upon as being places; and, though, from the subjective point of view, they mean a great deal for the individualised soul, they are both illusions within the greater illusion of the phenomenal world.

In the hell-state as well as in the heaven-state, desires become much more intense, since they no longer require to be expressed through the gross medium; and like desires, the

**Desires and Ex-
periences get inten-
sified after dropping
the Gross Body**

experiences of their fulfilment or non-fulfilment also become greatly intensified. In the earthly career, desires, as well as the pleasures and the sufferings, which they bring, are experienced through the medium of the gross body. The soul is of course actually using his higher bodies, even in his earthly career. But, in the earthly career, the consciousness of the soul is bound up with that of gross body; and therefore, the processes of consciousness have to traverse through an additional veil, with the result that they get mitigated in their force, liveliness, and intensity, just as the rays of light would get more dim, if they were required to pass through a thick glass. *During the habitation of the body, desires and experiences suffer deterioration of intensity; but when the habitation is given up, they undergo relative increment of intensity.*

In the heaven-state, the fulfilment of desires is not, as in the gross sphere, dependent upon the having of the object of desire; fulfilment of desire comes merely through the think-

**In the Heaven-
state there is a ful-
filment of Desires
through Thought**

ing of the object of desire. For example, if a person is desirous of hearing exquisite music, he would get the pleasure of actually hearing it, merely by thinking about exquisite music; the imaginative idea of

exquisite music, becomes in this state, a substitute for the physical sound vibrations of the gross sphere. The pleasure, which he derives from the thought of exquisite music is, for him, very much greater than the pleasure which he, in his earthly career, derived from the actual hearing of physical sounds. *In the heaven-state, there are no obstacles between desires and their fulfilment; and the pleasure of self-fulfilment through thought or feeling is always at hand.*

In fact, even in the earthly sphere of existence, some persons develop this capacity of making their pleasure independent of the possession of the gross object. Beethoven,

Heaven on Earth for example, was completely deaf; and, yet he could, through the exercise of imagination alone intensely enjoy his own compositions of music. So, *in a sense even on earth, he might, figuratively be said to have been in the heaven-state.* In the same way, a person who meditates on the Beloved with love, is deriving happiness merely through the thought of the beloved, without requiring the physical presence of the Beloved. But, after death, in the heaven-state, the enjoyment of such imaginative fulfilment is infinitely greater since consciousness is then disburdened of the outermost veil of the gross body.

Some of the desires have a direct relation to the possession and assimilation of the gross objects through the gross body. The courser desires of lust, gluttony, or craving for drinking wine are of this type. These

Coarser Desires contribute to the Hell-state desires are specifically earthly because of their being possessive and because of their involving an element of clinging to the physical object and fastening upon it; and in these desires, there is not only a preponderance of the sensations derived from the contact of the object, but also of those sensations, which constitute the response of the body itself. These coarser desires contribute to the hell-state.

In contrast with the finer desires, the coarser desires place an infinitely heavier premium on mere sensations, quite independently of any intellectual meaning or æsthetic or moral value. In the finer desires, like the desire for music,

Difference between Coarser and Finer Desires

there is of course an element of wanting sense-contact with the physical sounds but these sounds become important for the man, not so much in their own right, as in their capacity to express beauty. In the same way, a desire to hear discourses has a hold upon the mind, not so much because of the sensations of sound, but because of the intellectual meaning, which they convey and the emotional appeal which they have.

Thus, in the finer desires, the actual sensations play a subordinate role as compared with the other ideational aspects based upon the sensations; but in the coarser desires, the chief element is provided by the actual sensations, connected with the physical object and the sensations aroused

The Place of Bodily Sensations in Coarser Desires

by them in the bodily response to their possession. The organic sensations of the physical body play the greatest part in experiences connected with the coarser desires; and through them the individualised soul feels its own existence as the gross body, much more effectively and vividly than through the experiences connected with finer desires.

Almost the entire significance of experiences brought about by the fulfilment or non-fulfilment or coarser desires is constituted by the *bodily* sensations themselves; and, therefore,

Non-fulfilment of Coarser Desires due to Inaccessibility to the Gross Object

they can rarely, like finer desires, yield the full experience of fulfilment, merely through the exercise of thought and imagination. It is characteristic of the coarser desires to insist on the possession and assimilation of the gross object itself; any imaginative idea of the gross object merely serves the purpose of accentuating their

urge to reach out to the gross object. *Since the gross object of the coarser desires is not available in the subtle world these desires are mostly the occasion for the intensified experience of the suffering of non-fulfilment. The revived experiences in connection with the coarser desires go to make the sufferings of the hell-state, just as the revived experiences in connection with the finer desires go to make the pleasures of the heaven-state.*

Just as in this world, the presence of coarser desires leads to the preponderating balance of suffering over pleasure, in the life after death also, the revived experiences in connection with these coarser desires, lead to a

The Sufferings of Hell and the Pleasures of Heaven

preponderating balance of suffering over pleasure, thus bringing into existence the hell-state: and, just as, in this world,

the presence of finer desires, leads to a preponderating balance of pleasure over suffering, in the life after death also, the revived experiences in connection with the finer desires, lead to a *preponderating balance of pleasure over suffering, thus bringing into existence the heaven-state.*

But hell and heaven are both states of bondage *subject to the limitations of the the opposites of pleasure and pain ; and they are both states, whose duration is determined by the nature, amount and intensity of the accumulated impressions. Time in the subtle world is not the same, as time*

Time in the Subtle World

in the gross world, owing to the increased subjectivity of the states of consciousness ; but though the time in the subtle world is thus incommensurable with the time in the gross world, it is strictly determined by the impressions, accumulated in the gross world. However, the important fact is, that the hell-state and the heaven-state are far from being lasting ; and, after they have served their purpose in the life of the individualised soul, they both come to an end.

The coarser sensual desires like lust and their emotional products like hate and anger, all contribute to the life of

delusion and suffering, prevalent in the hell-state; and, the finer desires like idealistic aspirations, æsthetic and scientific interests, or good-will towards neighbours and others, and their emotional products like personal love or fellow-feeling, contribute to the life of enlightenment and pleasure prevalent in the heaven-state. *These states for most persons, consist in relieving through the experiences of the earthly life, by means of the vivification of the impressions left by them; and their duration and nature are dependent upon the duration and nature of experiences through which the person went during his life in the physical body.*

Vivification of Impressions

Termination of Hell and Heaven

Just as the gramophone record is set aside after the pin of the sound-box has travelled through each indentation present on it, the hell-state as well as the heaven-state comes to a termination, after consciousness has traversed the imprints left by earthly life: and, just as the nature of the song produced by the gramophone record is strictly determined by the original song which happens to be recorded therein, the quality of intensified and magnified experiences through which the soul passes after death is strictly determined by the kind of life, which the person led on earth, in the physical body. From this point of view, heaven and hell are shadows cast by man's earthly life.

Heaven and hell would, however, serve no specially useful purpose in the life of the individual soul if they were to consist merely of mental revival of the earthly past; that would mean bare repetition of what has once occurred.

Retrospective Survey of Earthly Experiences

Consciousness, in these after-death states, is in a position to have a *leisurely and effective survey of the animated record of earthly life*; and it can, through the intensification of experiences, attend to their nature with better facility and better results. On earth, the consciousness of most

persons is *predominantly objective and forward-looking* and under the pressure of unspent sanskaras, it is mostly concerned with the possible fulfilment of sanskaras through the *'present or the future*. But, in life after death, the consciousness of most persons is *predominantly subjective and retrospective*: and, in the absence of forward-goading sanskaras, it is, as in reminiscences, mostly pre-occupied with reviewing and assessing the significance of the *past*.

The fret and fury of immediate responses to the changing situations of earthly life is, in life after death, replaced by a more leisurely mood which is free from the urgency of immediately needed actions; and, the accumulated experience of the earthly career is now all available for reflection, in a form which is more vivid than is possible through memory in earthly life. *The snap-shots of earthly life have all been taken on the cinematic film of the mind; and it is now time to study the original earthly life, through the magnified projections of the filmed record on the screen of subjectivised consciousness.*

Thus the hell-state and the heaven-state become instrumental for the *assimilation of experience*, acquired in the earthly phase, so that the individualised soul can start its next incarnation in the physical

Assimilation of Earthly Experiences

body, with all the advantage of digested experience. The lessons, which are learnt by the soul, through much stock-taking and reflection, are by the power of their magnified suffering or happiness confirmed on the mind-body; and they become for the next incarnation part and parcel of the intuitive make-up of the active consciousness, without, in any way, involving the detailed revival of the individual events of previous incarnation. The truths absorbed by the mind in the life after death become in the next incarnation a part of the inborn wisdom. *Developed intuition is nothing but consolidated*

and compressed understanding, distilled through a multitude of diverse experiences, gathered in previous lives.

Different souls start, with different degrees of intuitive wisdom, which becomes their initial capital for the experiments and adventures of their earthly career. From one point of view, this intuition may seem to have been the product of past experiences, thus adding to the equipment of the psyche. But, it is truer to look upon intuition not as a new acquisition, but as an unfoldment of what was already latent in the individualised soul. And, from this deeper point of view, *the experiences of earthly life as well as the reflective and consolidatory processes to which they are subjected in life after death, are both merely instrumental in gradually releasing to the surface, the intuitive wisdom, which is already latent in the soul from the very beginning of creation.* Like earthly career and its experiences the states of hell and heaven in the life after death, are integral parts and incidents of that journey of the individualised soul, which is ultimately meant to get at the source of all things.

**Contribution of
Hell and Heaven to
the Release of Intui-
tive Wisdom**

Meher Baba

on

Reincarnation and Karma

Part III

THE EXISTENCE AND THE MEMORY OF
PAST LIVES

THOSE, who have an immediate access to the super-sensible truths concerning the life of the soul and its reincarnation, know, through their unclouded perception, that the so-called birth is only an incarnation of the individualised soul in the gross sphere. The unbroken continuity of the life of the reincarnating soul, is punctuated by the incidents of birth and death, which are both comparable to the gateways of the stream of life, advancing from one type of existence to another type of existence. They are both equally necessary in the greater life of the soul; and the interval between death and birth is as necessary as the interval between birth and death.

Like those, who consider death to be the termination of individual existence, those, who consider the birth of body

to be its beginning, are also confronted with conflict between their false assumptions, and the claims of rationalised intuition. From the point of view of individualistic justice the uneven lot of the good and the bad in respect of material happiness or prosperity seems seriously impugn the rationality and justification for the entire scheme of the universe. The sight of the virtuous being, at times, in the throes of suffering and the vicious being in possession of the amenities of pleasure, creates unsurmountable difficulties for any one, who would rather look upon life with the faith, that it is meant to fulfil an eternal and divine purpose.

The demands of intuition

Unless there is some deeper explanation, human mind is riddled with agonising perplexities that tend to embitter man's general outlook on life and foster a callous cynicism, which in many ways is even worse than the deepest of personal sorrow, which death may cause. But in spite of all appearances to the contrary, human mind has in it, *an inborn tendency to try to restore to itself a deep and unshakable faith in the intrinsic sanity and value of life*; and, except where artificial resistances are created, it finds acceptable those explanations, which are in conformity with this deeper law of the spirit.

Natural tendency to accept deeper explanations

Those, who have direct access to the truth of reincarnation are even fewer than those who have direct access to the truth of the immortality of the individual soul. The memories of all past lives are stored and preserved in the mind-body of the individual soul; but they are not accessible to the consciousness of ordinary persons, because a veil is drawn over them. When the soul changes its physical body, it gets a new brain; and its normal waking consciousness functions in close association with the brain-processes. Under ordinary circumstances, only the memories of the present life can

Effect of changing the brain

appear in consciousness, because *the new brain acts as a hindrance to the release of the memories of those experiences, which had to be gathered through the medium of other brains, in past lives.*

In rare cases, in spite of the resistance offered by the brain, some memories of past lives leak into the present life in the form of dreams, which are entirely unaccountable by means of the present life. A man may see in his dreams persons whom he has never seen in his present life; it often happens that the persons, who appeared in the dreams, were persons whom he had met in his past lives. But, of course, such dreams when they are of the ordinary type, cannot be treated as *memory of the past lives*; they merely indicate that the imagination, which worked in dreams, was influenced by materials, taken from the past lives of the man. *The real memory of past lives is clear, steady and sure like the memory of the present life*; and when it comes to a man he has no longer any doubt about his having existed in several lives, along with many others. Just as he cannot doubt his own past life in the present incarnation, he cannot doubt his life in his past incarnations.

The number of persons who can remember their past lives is very small as compared with the vast majority, who are so completely bound to the gross sphere of existence, that they do not even suspect super-sensible realities. The release of such memories is severely conditioned by the limitations of the brain, as long as consciousness is entangled with the physical body and its brain processes. But, *when consciousness is emancipated from the limitations imposed by the brain, it can recover and re-establish the memories of past lives, which are all stored in the mental body.* This involves a degree of *detachment and understanding* which only the spiritually advanced persons can have. The memory of past

lives can come with full clarity and certainty, even to those who are still crossing the inner planes but have not yet become spiritually perfect.

The memory of past lives does not, except in abnormal and rare cases, come back to a person, unless he is sufficiently advanced from the spiritual point of view; this provision, made by the laws of life, secures unhampered spiritual evolution of the individualised soul. On the first view, it might seem that the loss of the memory of previous lives, is all a loss; but this is far from being so. *For most purposes, knowledge about past lives is not at all necessary for the guidance of the onward course of spiritual evolution. Spiritual evolution consists in guiding life in the light of the highest values, perceived through intuition and not in allowing it to be determined by the past.* In many cases, even the memory of the present life acts as an obstacle for certain adjustments, demanded by the spiritual requirements of the changing situations of life. The problem of emancipation may, in a sense, be said to be a problem of securing freedom from the past, which in the case of those who are bound to the wheel of birth and death, inexorably shapes the present life.

Life would be infinitely more complicated if one who is not spiritually advanced is burdened by the conscious memory of numberless past lives; and he would get dazed and unsettled by the diversity of settings in which persons would appear to him in the light of his memory. But he is not called upon to face such confusion, because he is shielded from the resurrection of the memory of past lives. Things and persons come to him in a limited and definite context and setting, with the result that he finds it easy to determine his actions and responses in the light of what he knows from the present life. This does not mean that his

Loss of the memory of past lives does not affect spiritual progress

Shielding from complications

actions and responses are *entirely* determined by what he knows from his present life: all that has happened in the past lives also has its own unconscious but effective share in determining his actions and responses. But in spite of the actual influence of the past lives, the fact remains that, *since he is shielded from the resurrection of conscious memory, his consciousness is not subjected to that confusion, which would result, if the conscious memory of the past lives were to be among the data, which he has to consider for the purposes of determining his actions and responses.*

The resurrection of the memory of past lives can be faced without confusion or loss of balance, only when the person has become desireless and has lost all feeling of "mine" and "thine". The persons, whom he has once looked upon as belonging to him, might in the present life be seen by him to belong to some one else; and if he were to carry on his attachments and supposed claims, into the present life, he would create untold complications, misery and confusion for himself as well as others. *Possessiveness of all types has to be purged from the mind, if the aspirant is to be spiritually prepared for withstanding the disturbing influence of the memory coming back from past lives.*

When a man is spiritually prepared, he is completely desireless and full of impersonal love; all the entanglements of the personal ego have disappeared from his mind; *he can look upon his old friends and enemies with the same equanimity*; he is so lifted out of his limitations, that he is the same to his relations and non-relations of his past and present lives; and he is free from the idea of any pressing claims and counter-claims of himself against others or of others against himself, because he has realised the deeper truth of the unity of all life and the illusoriness of the mundane happenings.

**Condition of safety
in the release of
memory**

**Spiritual prepara-
tion**

It is only when a person is thus spiritually prepared that he is unaffected by the revived memory of past lives; and it is only then that it is worthwhile for him to have an access to it, for he can then have that cool and unerring judgment and pure and incorruptible love, which enable him to make right and wise use of the new knowledge, gathered through the resurrected memory of past lives. This knowledge opens to him a great deal of information about his own incarnations and also about the incarnations of others, connected with him in the past lives; and, *it not only enables him to advance further on the path by conscious karmic adjustments*, but also to help others, on the path, by directing them, in the light of their past lives.

Wise use of resurrected memory

The speed of spiritual evolution is faster after the natural recovery of the memory of past incarnations. Disentanglement from the mundane things is facilitated by the conscious knowledge about the history of the development of such entanglements. Evolution, which so far was mostly unconscious of the limiting past, now becomes conscious of the limiting past; *the obstacles as well as the facilities created by the past, are now in the reach of consciousness, and, therefore, are capable of intelligent and careful handling*. Inarticulate intuition is supplemented by rationalised data; therefore, action has less possibility of error and becomes more potent, in producing desirable results.

Advantages of recovered memory

The Masters of wisdom, who have become spiritually perfect, have no special interest in past incarnations; they are among the many unimportant facts of mundane existence.

Shortcut through knowledge of past lives

If they make any use of their knowledge of the past lives of a person, it is only for helping him onwards towards the eternal Truth. Their knowledge of the past, places them in a special position of giving an aspirant, just that

guidance which he needs. The details of the Path are often determined by (i) the incidents of the past, (ii) the manner in which the aspirant has sought the highest Truth in his past lives, and (iii) the obstacles or the facilities, which he has created for himself, through his past doings. All these things, which are hidden from the aspirant, are open to the unclouded perception of the Master, who uses his knowledge in order to accelerate the spiritual progress of the seeker of the Truth. The Master leads the aspirant from the place in which he has landed himself, through the experimentation and search of several lives. *In matters spiritual, as in matters mundane, greater and unerring knowledge means economy of energy and time.*

Meher Baba

on

Reincarnation and Karma

Part IV

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS OF AN INCARNATION

THE individualised soul has its beginning and source in the infinite, formless, sexless and indivisible being of God, who is beyond all forms of duality or evolution. And,

with the beginning of the individualised soul, there is the beginning of duality and evolution, though the specific form of duality consisting in the distinction and attraction based upon sex, makes its appearance at a later stage of evolution. Duality exists as soon as there is subject and object, a centre of consciousness (howsoever dim) and its environment. But, sex is a specific kind of *bodily attraction*, which presupposes differentiation of forms, a specific kind of psychic entanglement with the forms, and specific expression of life and energy.

In the mineral kingdom, there is no sex. In the kingdom of plants and trees the bodily differentiations of sex,

with specialised biological functions, have come into existence.

**Sex in minerals
and plants**

But plants and trees do not generate *sex-consciousness*, since the development of consciousness in plants and trees is rudimentary and its expressions are not influenced by these bodily differentiations. The possible contact between the male and the female in plants and trees is (due to their being fixed in the ground) *not direct*, but only *indirect*, through the intermediate agency of winds, bees, etc. Therefore, though from the point of view of the evolution of *forms*, sex-differentiation may be said to have begun to emerge, even at the level of plants and trees, from the point of view of their own *consciousness*, they cannot be said to have any sex, because *their consciousness of duality is not in any way coloured by sex*.

In the evolution of sex duality, plants and trees stand midway between minerals, who have no sex and birds and animals, who have it, in its complete form. Just before soul incarnates

**Sex in birds and
animals**

itself in a human form, it arrives in the animal forms, at full consciousness and energy; it then drops the animal body to take a human body. *Reincarnation of the individualised soul through human forms, is preceded by its transmigration through the sub-human forms.*

In the animals, sex not only expresses itself through the bodily differences and activities but is a deep-rooted factor, which affects consciousness. Since, the humans inherit

**The psyche is
modified by sex**

their bodies as well as consciousness, from highly evolved animals, like apes, the humans also find themselves subject to sex-duality. *In the humans, sex is so completely developed that it is no longer a matter merely of the body, for it substantially modifies the psyche, which seeks its expression through the body, according to whether the form is male or female.*

After attaining the human form, there is, as a rule, *no reversion to animal forms*; and, the case of retrogression to sub-human forms comes under special and rare exceptions.

Male and female incarnations

The normal course for the soul, which has once attained the human status, is to go through countless reincarnations in the human form itself, though the human form may sometimes be male and sometimes female, according to the *sanskaras* and the spiritual requirements of the soul.

The female form has the special prerogative, that even the *Sadgurus* and the *Avatars* have to be born through

Prerogatives of male and female forms

the female form; but the male form has the prerogative that the majority of the *Sadgurus* appear in a male form. Women can become saints and *Sadgurus*; but the *Avatar* always appears in a male form.

The general facilities and handicaps of an incarnation are always determined by the specific *sanskaras*, which the individual soul has accumulated in the past. *The needs of*

Facilities and handicaps of an incarnation are determined by accumulated sanskaras

the further development of the soul are relative to the nature of its accumulated sanskaras; and, therefore, it is these accumulated sanskaras, which really determine whether the soul takes its incarnation on the earth in the East or in the West, or whether it takes its incarnation in the male form or in the female form, or whether it takes its incarnation in one cycle of existence or another cycle of existence. The facilities afforded by a specific incarnation are dependent not only upon whether an incarnation is in the male form or female form, but also upon whether it takes place, in one cycle of existence or another cycle of existence, and whether it has its tenor of earthly life, in the Eastern hemisphere or in the Western hemisphere.

Roughly speaking, to-day, the East on the whole has developed more on spiritual lines, than on material lines, with

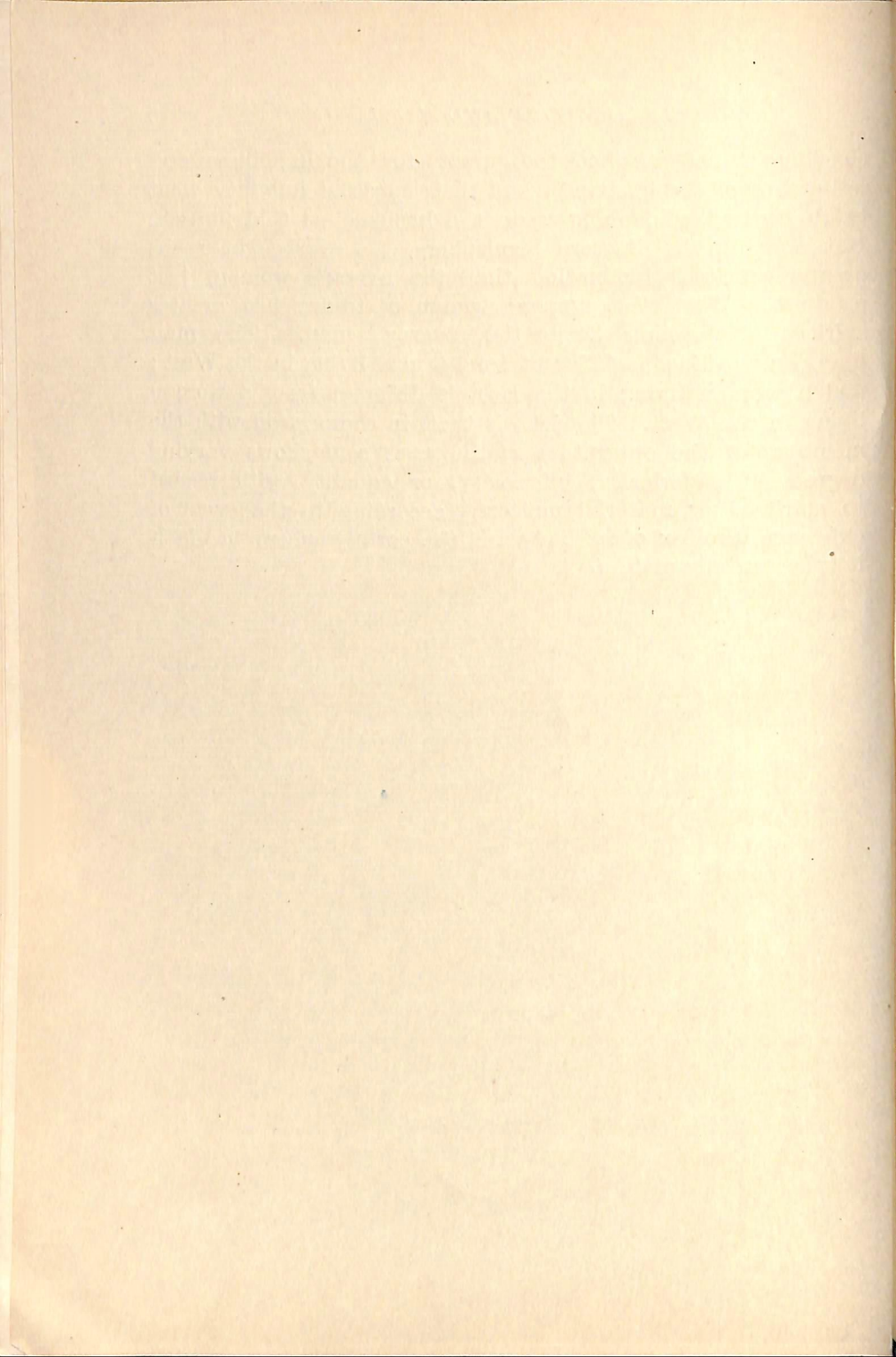
the result that the Eastern mind has a spontaneous aspiration for God ; and the West, on the whole has developed more on material lines than on spiritual lines, with the result that the Western mind has a spontaneous urge towards intellectual and artistic things. An incarnation in the East usually brings with it a greater tendency towards spiritual life than an incarnation in the West ; and an incarnation in the West usually brings with it a greater tendency towards material life, than an incarnation in the East. But, *the soul has to experience the material as well as the spiritual aspects of life, before it is freed from the fetters of divided life* ; therefore, the same soul has to incarnate in the East as well as in the West.

If a soul has had many successive incarnations in the East and then takes an incarnation in the West, it carries with it, the impressions of its lives in the East and though living in the West, it leads a life, which is essentially in conformity with the Eastern pattern ; and if a soul has had many successive incarnations in the West and then takes an incarnation in the East, it carries with it, the impressions of its lives in the West, and though living in the East, it leads a life, which is in conformity with the Western pattern. So, sometimes we have the *European soul in an Indian form or an Indian soul in the European form* ; but, it must be borne in mind that this distinction is only relative to past incarnations and sanskaras and that the soul, as such, is beyond such distinctions.

The facilities afforded by male and female incarnations respectively are not rigidly invariable. They change according to the cycles of existence as well as according to whether the incarnation is in the East or in the West.

Cycles of existence In some ages, men are more active, energetic and materially-minded than women ; in some ages the reverse is the true. In the past, the women of the East were brave and intellectual. They

considered no sacrifice too great for the happiness and well-being of the husband ; and their spiritual humility went to the extent of looking upon the husband as God himself. But now, in the Eastern hemisphere, the average man has greater spiritual inclination than the average woman, just as, in the West, the average woman of to-day has greater spiritual inclination than the average man. The man living in the East is different from a man living in the West ; and a woman living in the East is different from a woman living in the West. The joke is that, in comparison with the members of the opposite sex, the *same* soul shows varying degrees of superiority, inferiority, or equality with regard to spiritual or material matters, according to the cycle of existence, the sex of its body and the earthly sphere, in which it takes an incarnation.



Meher Baba

ON

Reincarnation and Karma

Part V

THE NEED FOR MALE AND FEMALE
INCARNATIONS

THOUGH the facilities afforded by each sex are variable, according to the age and the place, in which the incarnation takes place, it still remains true that *each sex affords special*

Specific facilities
of male and female
forms

*facilities for the development of experience
along specific lines.* The lessons which are

readily learnt in male incarnations, may not be easily attainable through female incarnations; and the lessons which are readily learnt in female incarnations, may not be easily attainable in male incarnations. *Men as a rule excel in the qualities of the head and will; they are capable of sound judgment and steadfast purpose. Women, as a rule, excel in the qualities of the heart; they are capable of intense love, which makes them welcome any sacrifice for the loved one. It is owing to this capacity of women for love, that in devotional references, the name of a female has an invariable precedence,*

as when the *Bhaktas* sing of Radha-Krishna or Sita-Ram. In the qualities of the heart, women are usually superior to men; and in the qualities of the head and will, men are usually superior to women. The interesting point is that the same soul excels in the qualities of the heart or in the qualities of the head and will, according to whether it takes an incarnation in a female form or in a male form. *The alternate development of specific spiritual qualities goes on through the alternation between the male and female forms, until the development is all-sided.*

Since male and female incarnations are equally necessary for self-knowledge, it is not right to look upon one as being more important than the other. Though there are differences between the nature of the respective facilities afforded by them, they are both indispensable. *The soul must go through male incarnations as well as female incarnations, if it is to have that richness of experience, which is a condition of attaining the realisation that, the soul, in itself, is beyond all forms of duality, including the accentuated duality based on sex.*

Before the soul is set free from all sanskaras, it assumes numerous male forms and numerous female forms. If the soul were to incarnate only in the male forms or only in the female forms, its experience remains one-sided and incomplete. The duality of experience can be overcome only through understanding; and the understanding of experience is only partial as long as it moves within the limits of only one of the two opposites. *The unity of the subject and the object of experience is unattainable as long as there is in the object any aspect or element, which is not fully covered by one's own experience; and this applies particularly to sex-duality.*

The Psyche of the Soul has in it the gathered experience of male incarnations as well as that of female incarnations. Since

the soul identifies itself with the body, the psychological tendencies which harmonise with the sex of the body, get a suitable medium for expression, and the psychological tendencies which are characteristic of the opposite sex, ordinarily get suppressed into the unconscious part of the psyche, because they do not harmonise with the sex of the body, and find the medium of expression obstructive. When the soul takes a female body, the male tendencies are, so to say, held in abeyance and only the female tendencies are released for expression; in the same way, when the soul takes a male body, the female tendencies are held in abeyance and the male tendencies are released for expression.

Identification with the body, involves identification with the sex of the body; it, therefore, implies a free play only for that limited part of the psyche, which is in tune with the sex of the body; and, since the other part of the Psyche is repressed and latent in the unconscious, there arises in the conscious part, a feeling of incompleteness as well as a tendency to restore completeness, through attachment to persons of the opposite sex. By getting entangled with the opposite sex, the buried part of psyche, which did not go well with the body, is seeking some kind of expression through another; from this point of view, sex-attraction might be said to be a result of the effort, which the mind makes to unite with its own unconscious part.

Sex is a manifestation of the ignorant attempt which the conscious mind makes to compensate for the psychic fragmentariness, entailed by identification with the sex of the body; but, this attempt to compensate for fragmentariness is doomed to be futile, because it is itself, not only based upon identification with the body, but actually accentuates it, by setting into opposition the body of the opposite sex and getting entangled with it, through attachment and possessiveness.

Division of the psyche

Genesis of sex-entanglement

Self-defeating compensation

When the soul is trying to overcome sex-duality through detachment towards the opposite sex, it is paving a way for understanding the experience associated with the opposite sex,

Understanding through detachment from *within*. Then a man tries to understand a woman, not through the eyes of the male, but through the imaginative reaching out towards what the woman feels herself to be, in her own personal experience; in the same way, a woman tries to understand a man, not through the eyes of the female, but through the imaginative reaching out towards what a man feels himself to be, in his own personal experience. So, paradoxical though it may seem, the *form of the opposite sex prevents the true understanding of experience, associated with the opposite sex; and, detachment to the form of the opposite sex, facilitates the true understanding of the experience, associated with the opposite sex, because it removes the barrier created by sex-obsessed imagination.*

If a man is transcending sex-duality and trying to understand the experience, associated with the opposite sex, he sometimes actually exhibits the psychological traits usually associated with the opposite sex. Thus, some

Freedom from sex-ridden imagination aspirants, in the male body, at one phase or another, actually put on the clothes of the females, talk like them, feel like them and take on their psychic traits and habits. But this is only a passing phase; and when the inner understanding of the relevant experiences is complete, they neither experience themselves as male alone nor as female alone, but as being *beyond the distinction of sex*. The experiences connected with the male and the female forms are, both accessible and intelligible to the aspirant, who has transcended the sex-distinction; and he remains unaffected by the limitations of either of them, just because through understanding, *he has freed himself from the limiting obsessions characteristic of sex-ridden imagination.*

The completeness, which the mind seeks, is not attainable through attachment to other forms and their accession; it is

to be sought *within* by recapturing the lost unity of the mind.

Reconciliation of
conscious and un-
conscious mind

Reconciliation of the conscious and the unconscious mind is possible, not through sex-attraction or through other forms of possessiveness, but through non-identification

with the body and its sex. Non-identification with the body removes the barrier, which prevents the amalgamation and integration of the total experiences, deposited in the Psyche of the soul. The completeness within, is to be sought by overcoming the sex-duality and distinction, which accentuates identification with the body.

To be free from attachment to the opposite sex, is to be free from the domination of the sex of the body, in which the soul has incarnated itself; and to be free from the domination of the sex of the body,

Divine Love

amounts to the annihilation of the major

part of those sanskaras, which compel the soul to identify itself with the body. The transcending of the sex-duality, does not itself amount to the overcoming of all duality; but it certainly goes a long way towards facilitating the complete transcendence of duality in all its forms. On the other hand, it is equally true that *the problem of sex-duality is a part of the problem of duality as such; and, its complete solution comes, when the wider problem of all duality is solved through the Divine Love, in which there is neither 'I' nor 'You', neither man nor woman.* The purpose of male and female incarnations is the same as the purpose of evolution itself; it is to enable man to arrive at his own undivided and indivisible existence.

Meher Baba

ON

Action and Inaction

ALL action, except that which is intelligently designed to attain God-realization, creates a binding for consciousness: it is not only an expression of accumulated ignorance, but is also a further addition to that accumulated ignorance.

Religious forms and ceremonies as well as rituals and injunctions of different creeds and spiritual institutions have a tendency to encourage the spirit of love and worship; and as such, they are to a limited extent helpful in wearing out the ego-shell in which human consciousness is caught. But if they are unintelligently and mechanically followed, the inner spirit of love and worship gets dried up; and then *they only result in hardening the ego-shell rather than wearing it out*. Therefore, rituals and ceremonies cannot carry a man very far on the Path: and if they are unintelligently followed, they create as much binding as any other unintelligent action. When they are deprived of all inner life and meaning, they might be said to be even more dangerous than other forms of unintelligent action, because man pursues them with the belief that they are helpful for God-realization, whereas they are in fact far from being helpful. Owing to this element of self-delusion, lifeless forms and ceremonies become a *side-tracking* on the Path; and often through mere force of habit, man becomes so much attached to these external forms, that he cannot be disillusioned about their *imaginary value* except through intense suffering.

Inaction is, in many ways, preferable to unintelligent action, for it has at least the merit of not creating further *sanskaras* and complication. Even good and righteous action

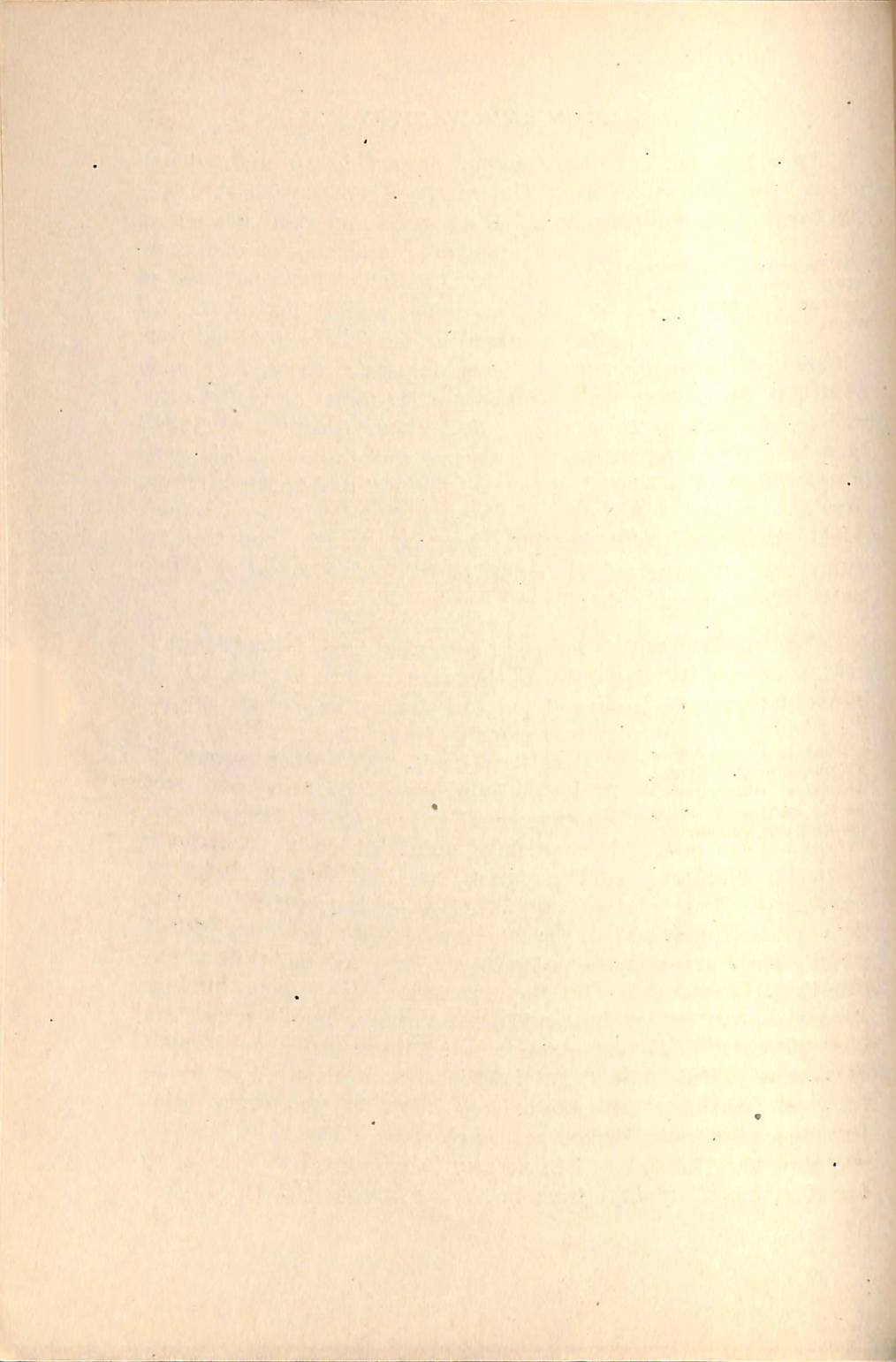
Life seeks to free
itself from self-
created entangle-
ment

creates *sanskaras* and means one more addition to the complications created by past actions and experiences. *All life is an effort to attain freedom from self-created entanglement; it is a desperate struggle to undo what has been done under ignorance, to throw away the accumulated burden of the past, to find rescue from the debris left by a series of temporary achievements and failures. Life seeks to unwind the limiting sanskaras of the past and to obtain release from the mazes of its own making, so that its further creations might spring directly from the heart of eternity, and bear the stamp of unhampered freedom and intrinsic richness of being, which knows no limitation.*

The action, which helps in attaining God, is truly intelligent and spiritually fruitful, because it brings release from bondage: and it is second only to that action, which springs

Inaction is often
a necessary stage
between unintelli-
gent action and
intelligent action

spontaneously from the state of God-realization itself. All other forms of action, (howsoever good or bad and howsoever effective or ineffective from the worldly point of view) contribute towards bondage, and as such, are inferior to inaction. *Inaction is less helpful than intelligent action; but it is better than unintelligent action, for it amounts to the non-doing of that which would have created a binding.* The movement from unintelligent action to intelligent action (i.e., from binding *karma* to unbinding *karma*) is often through inaction, which is characteristic of the stage where unintelligent action has stopped because of critical doubt, but intelligent action has not yet begun because there has not arisen any adequate momentum. But this special type of inaction, which plays its part in the progress on the Path should in no way be mixed up with ordinary inaction, which springs from inertia or fear of life.



Meher Baba

on

Reincarnation and Karma

Part VI

THE OPERATION OF KARMA THROUGH
SUCCESSIVE LIVES

IN the successive incarnations, which the individual soul takes, there is not only a thread of continuity and identity (as manifested in the personal memory, revived in the case of advanced souls), but there is an uninterrupted reign of the law of cause and effect, through the persistence and operation of *Karma*. The

Successive Incarnations are Governed by the Law of Karma

successive incarnations, with all their particulars, are closely and unfailingly determined by a rational law, so that it becomes possible for the individual soul to mould its future, through wise and intelligent action. The actions of the past lives determine the conditions and circumstances of the present life; and the actions of the present life have their share in determining the conditions and circumstances of future lives.

The successive incarnations of the individual soul yield their full significance, only in the light of the operation of the law of Karma.

The intermittent incarnations in the gross world are only apparently disconnected. *Karma persists as a connecting link and determining factor, through the mental body, which*

Persistence of Karma through the Mental Body

remains a permanent and constant factor, through all the lives of the soul.

The law of *Karma* and its manner of operation, cannot be fully intelligible as long as the gross body and the gross world are considered to be the only facts of existence. Karmic determination is made possible by the existence of subtle and mental bodies and worlds.

The plane on which one can possess physical consciousness is the gross world. The planes, on which one can possess the consciousness of desires are the subtle world. And the

Mental and Subtle Bodies

planes, on which the soul can have mental consciousness are the mental world. The source of desire is to be

found in the mind, which is on the mental planes. Here, the seed of desire is attached to the mind; the desire exists here in an involved form, just in the same way as the tree is latent in the seed. The mental body, which is the seat of the mind is often called *Karana Sharira* or the causal body, because *it stores within itself the seeds or the causes of all desires*. The mind retains all impressions and dispositions in a latent form. The limited 'I' or the ego is composed of these *samskaras*. However, the actual manifestation of *samskaras* in consciousness, as expressed through different mental processes, takes place in the subtle body.

The Soul, which in reality is one and undifferentiated gets apparently individualised, through the limitations of the mental body, which is the seat of the ego-mind. The ego-

Formation and Continuation of the Ego-Mind

mind is formed by the accumulated impressions of past experiences and actions; and it is this ego-mind, which constitutes the kernel of the existence of the reincarnating

individual. The ego-mind, as a reservoir of latent impressions is the state of the mental body; the ego-mind, becoming spirit and experiencing activated and manifested impressions is the state of the subtle body; and the ego-mind as descended in the gross sphere for creative action, is the state of a physical incarnation. Thus, *the ego-mind, which is seated in the mental body is the entity, which has all the phases of continued existence as a separate individual.*

The ego-mind which is seated in the mental body, takes lower bodies according to the impressions stored in it. These impressions determine whether a person will die young or old, whether

**Impressions in the
Ego-Mind Determine the Particular
Conditions of Incarnation**

he will experience health or illness or both, whether he will be beautiful or ugly, whether he will suffer from physical handicaps like blindness or will have general efficiency of the body, whether he will have a sharp or a dull intellect, whether he will be pure or impure of heart, fickle or steadfast in will, and whether he will be immersed in the pursuit of material gains or will seek the inner light of the spirit.

The ego-mind, in its turn, becomes modified through the deposited impressions of *Karma* (which includes not only gross and physical action, but thought and feeling), and the

**The Game of
Duality**

circumstances of each incarnation get adjusted to the composition and the needs of the ego mind. Thus, if a person has developed certain special capacities or tendencies in one incarnation, he takes them on to the succeeding incarnations; and things that have been left incomplete in one incarnation can get completed in the incarnations, which follow. Through the persistence of impressions the Karmic links, which have been forged in one incarnation, are carried on and developed in succeeding incarnations, so that *those who have been closely associated with each other, through good or bad dealings, have a tendency to have recurring contacts, and carry on*

the game of duality, far enough to gather so much experience of the opposites, that the soul out of the fulness of its experience eventually becomes ripe for dropping the ego-mind, and turning inwards for knowing itself as the Oversoul.

If there has been a give and take between any persons, that forges Karmic and sansakaric ties between them and creates *claims and counter-claims*; and they have to come together and carry on fresh deals in order to meet these claims and counter-claims. *That, which a person gives with a selfish motive binds him, just in the same way, as that, which he takes with a sense of separateness.* The deal of give or take, which thus binds, need not be purely on a material plane in the form of exchange of goods, or money, or the performing of some physical tasks; it might consist of exchange of views or feelings.

If a person pays respect to a saint on the higher planes, he creates a claim against him, so that even if the saint is himself crossing the inner planes and treading the Path, he has to tarry and give him such help, as will bring the person who pays respect, to that point on the Path, which he has himself reached. Paying respect to a saint thus amounts to the *Karma of interference*. Though respect, as such, is a good thing to receive, in receiving it, the saint may have to stop on the Path until he has helped the person who came to him and gave him respect.

The quick and unfailing responsiveness of souls, is expressed in the law that hate begets hate, lust begets lust, and love begets love. This law operates not only during a single life-time, but *across several lives*. A man feels impelled to hate or fear an enemy of past lives, although present life may not have provided him with any apparent reason for this attitude: and in the same

Claims and Counter-claims are Created by Give and Take

Karma of Interference

The Responsiveness of Souls

way, without any apparent reason from the present life, he is impelled to love and help a friend of past lives. The person may, in most cases, not be aware of the reason for his unaccountable attitude; but that does not mean that there is, in fact, no reason for it. Many things, which seem to be inexplicable on the surface, become intelligible, when they are considered in the light of the Karmic links brought forward from past lives.

The law of Karma is the law exhibiting itself through continuously changing mutual adjustments, which must go on, where there are several individual souls, who seek self-expression in a common world. It is an outcome of the responsiveness of ego-minds.

The Law of Karma is the Law of Action and Reaction

The rhythm, on which two souls start their relationship, tends to perpetuate itself unless the soul, through fresh intelligent Karma, changes the rhythm and raises it to a rhythm of higher quality.

As a rule, accumulated Karma has a certain inertia of its own; it does not change the nature of its momentum, unless there is a special reason for it. *Before Karma is created, the individual has a sort of freedom*

Freedom of Karma *to choose what it shall be; but after it has been accomplished, it becomes a factor, which cannot be ignored and which has either to be expended through the results, which it invites, or counteracted by fresh and appropriate Karma.*

The pleasure and the pain, experienced in the life on earth, the success or failure, which attend it, the attainments and obstacles, with which it is strewn, the friends and foes, which make their appearance in it, are all determined by the Karma of past lives.

Fate

Karmic determination is popularly designated as fate. Fate however is not some foreign and oppressive principle. Fate is man's own creation pursuing him from past lives: and just as it has been shaped by past Karma, it can also be modified,

remoulded and even undone, through *Karma* in the present life.

If the nature of the *Karma* on earthly life, is determined by the impressions stored in the ego-mind, the impressions stored in the ego-mind are, in their turn, determined by the nature of *Karma* in earthly life. The impressions in the ego-mind and the nature of *Karma* are interdependent. The *Karma* on earth, plays an important part in shaping and reshaping the impressions in the ego-mind and giving it a momentum, which decides the future destiny of the individual. *It is in the arena of earthly existence that creative and effective Karma can take place, through the medium of the gross body.*

The proper understanding and use of the law of *Karma* enables man to become a *master of his own destiny*, through intelligent and wise action. Each person has become what he is, through his own accumulated actions; and it is through his own actions that he can mould himself according to the pattern of his heart or finally emancipate himself from the reign of Karmic determination, which governs him through life and death.

Broadly speaking, *Karma* is of two kinds: there is the *Karma*, which binds; and there is the *Karma*, which helps towards emancipation and self-realisation. The good as well as bad *Karma* binds as long as it springs from the ego-mind and feeds it; but *Karma becomes a power for emancipation, when it springs from right understanding.* Right understanding in this respect, is best imparted by the Masters, who know the soul, in its true nature and destiny, along with the complications created by Karmic laws.

The *Karma*, which truly counts, comes into existence after the person has developed the sense of the distinction

between good and bad. During the first seven years of childhood, the impressions, which are released for expression are very faint; and they also entail a consciousness of the world, which is correspondingly less responsive to the distinctions of the world. Therefore, the actions of children under seven years, do not leave any strong or effective impressions on the ego-mind; and they do not play any important part in shaping their future. *True and effective Karma, which moulds the ego-mind and its future, begins after the soul develops a sense of responsibility; and this sense of responsibility is dependent upon the sense for the distinction between good and bad, which usually dawns fully when the soul has spent the first few years of childhood.*

The law of *Karma* is, in the world of values, the counter-part of the law of cause and effect, which operates in the physical world. If there is no law of cause and effect in the physical

**Comparison with
the Law of Cause
and Effect**

world, there will be a chaos; and people would not know, which thing might be expected to follow which thing. In the same way, if there is no law of *Karma*, in the world of values, there will be an utter uncertainty of results in the world of values, which men cherish; and people would not know whether they are to expect good or bad results from their actions. In the world of physical events, there is the law of *conservation of energy* according to which no energy is ever lost; and in the world of values, there is the law that *once Karma comes into existence, it does not mysteriously flitter away, without leading to its natural result, but persists until it bears its own fruit or is undone through counter-Karma.* Good actions lead to good results; and bad actions lead to bad results.

It is through the systematic connection between cause and effect in the world of values, that the moral order of the universe is sustained. If the law of *Karma* were to

**The Law of Karma
Maintains the Moral
Order of the Universe**

be subject to any relaxation, reversals or exceptions, and if it were not strictly applicable in the domain of values, there would be no moral

order in the universe ; and if there is no moral order in the universe, human existence would be precarious from the point of view of attainment of values. In the universe, where there is no moral order, human endeavour would be perpetually fraught with doubt and uncertainty. *There cannot be any serious pursuit of values, if there is no assured connection between means and ends and if the law of Karma can be set aside.* The inflexibility of the law of *Karma* is a condition of significant action; significant human action would be utterly impossible if the law of *Karma* could be safely ignored or flouted.

In being inviolable, the law of *Karma* is like the other laws of nature. *However the rigorousness of the operation of Karmic laws, does not come to the soul, as the oppressiveness of*

Karma and Responsibility

some external and blind power, but as something, which is involved in the rationality of the scheme of life. Karmic determination is the condition of true responsibility. It means that the man will reap as he sows. What a person gathers by way of his experience, is invariably connected with what he does.

If a person has done an evil turn to some one, he must receive the penalty for it and welcome the *evil rebounding upon himself*; and if he has done a good turn to some one,

Law of Karma is an Expression of Justice

he must also receive the reward for it and enjoy the *good rebounding upon himself.* What he does for another, he has also done for himself, although it may take time for him to realise that this is exactly so. The law of *Karma* might be said to be an expression of justice or a reflection of the unity of life, in the world of duality.

Meher Baba

on

Reincarnation and Karma

Part VII

THE DESTINY OF THE REINCARNATING INDIVIDUAL

THE series of incarnations, which the soul is impelled to take through *Karmic* determination, has a tendency to become endless. Through innumerable lives, the aspirant has come into contact with countless persons; and he has had all kinds of dealings of give and take with them. He is entangled in web of all sorts of debts to pay and dues to recover; and according to the *Karmic* law, he can neither avoid the debts nor the dues; since both have been the outcome of *Karma*, inspired by desire. He keeps incarnating in order to pay off his debts and to recover his dues, but, even when he means to clear up the account, he is often unable to do so.

All persons, with whom a man has *Karmic* links of debts or dues, may not be in incarnation, when he has taken

a body ; or he might, owing to the limitations, imposed by his own capacities and circumstances, be unable to meet all the complex requirements of the situation. When he is trying to clear up the accounts in relation to those, with whom he has past links, he cannot, in this very attempt, help *creating fresh claims and counterclaims* concerning them : and even with regard to other new persons, he cannot but create debts and dues, of diverse kinds and magnitudes, and get involved with them. *A man goes on adding to his debts and dues, with the result that there is no getting out of his endlessly increasing and complex Karmic entanglements.*

The carrying on of the yarn of *Karmic* debts and dues would have been endless, if there had been no provision for getting out of the *Karmic* entanglements, through the help of the Master, who can, not only initiate the aspirant into the supreme art of unbinding *Karma*, but can, directly become instrumental for freeing him from his *Karmic* entanglements. *The Master has attained unity with God, whose cosmic and universal life includes all persons ; and, being one with all life, he can, in his representative capacity, become, for the sake of the aspirant, the medium for the clearing up of all debts and dues, which have come into existence, through his dealings with countless persons, whom he has contacted in his incarnations.* If a person must get bound to some one, it is best for him to get bound to God or the Master ; because this tie ultimately facilitates the emancipation from all other *Karmic* ties.

When the good *Karma* of past lives has secured for the aspirant the benefit of having a Master, the best thing that he can do is to surrender himself to the Master and to serve him. Through surrenderance, the aspirant throws the burden of his *Karma* on the Master, who has to think out the ways and means of freeing him from it : and through service of the Master, he gets an opportunity to

Difficulty of Clear-
ing up Debts and
Dues

Master can Be-
come the Medium for
Clearing up Karmic
Debts and Dues

Relation between
Master and Disciple
is carried on through
Several Lives

get clear of his *Karmic* entanglements. The relation between the Master and the disciple is a relation, which is often carried on from one life to another for several reincarnations. If the Master who has given instruction and help to a group of disciples, takes an incarnation for his work, he usually brings them with him, his group of disciples in order to help them further on their Path. Those, who have been connected with him in past lives, are drawn to him by an unconscious magnetism not knowing why they are thus drawn. But there is usually a long history to an apparently unaccountable devotion which the disciple feels for his Master; and the disciple is often beginning where he had left in the last incarnation.

When the disciple invites the attention and grace of a Master, it is not without reason. Sometimes, the Master seems to impart spirituality to a disciple, without there being

Inviting the Grace
of the Master

any apparent effort or sacrifice on the part of the disciple; but these are always cases, where the disciple has earned the

right to this favour by his associations and endeavours in past lives. The love and devotion, which the disciple may have felt for the Master through his past lives, has formed *deep connection* between him and the Master, so that the *awakening of spiritual longing in the disciple has its counterpart in the grace and help, which flow to him from the Master*. It is through his own past unbinding *Karma* that a person invites the grace of the Master, just as it is through his own binding *Karma* that he invites upon himself the pleasure and the pain as well as the good and the evil, of which he is the recipient in this life.

As a rule, the person, who has entered the Path gradually advances on the Path, until he attains the goal; but, this does not apply to those, who have not definitely entered the Path or have no Master to guide.

Spiritual Progress
requires Active
Effort

Through their chaotic pursuits of several lives, most persons are likely to go further away from the goal by the heap-

ing up of binding *sanskaras*; so, spiritual progress cannot be

said to be *automatic*, in the sense that it will come about without the active efforts of the person concerned.

Sooner or later, the logic of experience gathered through several lives, drives every one to seek the highest goal and enter the Path; and once the aspirant enters the Path, he

**Danger of Falling
Back**

usually goes forward with steady progress. As he advances on the Path, he often develops certain latent capacities, which enable him not only to have conscious experience of the inner subtle and mental worlds, but also to manipulate the forces and powers, which are available on the higher planes. The first two planes are bad to know: there are many, who in some life or another have been through these planes. But, *the crossing of the first few planes does not necessarily ensure sure and steady progress.* There are many pit-falls on the Path itself; and unless there is the assured guidance of a Master, the aspirant is in danger of falling back.

From the first few planes, the aspirant may have such set-back, instead of going ahead towards God, he suffers severe retrogression. In some exceptional cases, the aspirant of the

Yoga-bhrasta

higher planes, may, through erroneous *Karma*, invite upon himself a fall that takes him back, so far that it takes ages for him to come back to his first point of progress. The aspirant, who has such a fall is known as a *yoga-bhrasta*. *Even the yogis are subject to the unyielding law of Karma, which knows no exceptions, concessions or preferences.* It is only when the aspirant has the advantage of the guidance of a Perfect Master, that the spiritual journey is rendered safe and steady; and it is only then that there is no possibility of a fall or retrogression. The Master wards him from erroneous *Karma*, in which he might otherwise have got involved.

The treading of the spiritual Path is carried on for several incarnations before the aspirant attains the goal. *Centuries of continued sacrifices, service, self-purification, suffering, and determined search have to roll on, if the aspirant is to be spiritually*

prepared for the final realisation of God. God-realisation, which is the goal of the reincarnating individual, is never an attainment of a single life; it always is the culmination of the continued endeavour, which he has put in through a succession of many lives. Unintelligent *Karma* of many lives has gone to create the bindings of the individual soul; and it has to be undone by the persistent creation of intelligent and unbinding *Karma*, which also has to be carried on for many lives.

The power that keeps the individual soul bound to the wheel of life and death is its thirst for separate existence, which is a condition of a host of cravings, connected with the objects and experiences of the world of duality.

Power behind Reincarnations is Craving

It is for the fulfilment of cravings, that the ego-mind keeps incarnating itself. When all forms of craving disappear the im-

pressions, which create and enliven the ego-mind disappear; and with the disappearance of these impressions, the ego-mind itself is shed, with the result that there is only the realisation of the one eternal, unchanging Over-soul or God, who is the only reality. *God-realisation is the end of the incarnations of the ego-mind because it is the end of its very existence; as long as the ego-mind exists in some form, there is an inevitable and irresistible urge for incarnations. When there is the cessation of the ego-mind, there is the cessation of incarnations, in the final fulfilment of self-realisation.*

The life of the reincarnating individual has many events and phases. The wheel of life, makes its ceaseless rounds, lifting the individual to the heights or bringing him down from high positions; it thus contributes to the enrichment of his experience. Ideals left unattained in one life are pursued further

The Destiny of Reincarnations

in the next life; things left undone are finished; the edges left by incomplete endeavour are rounded up; wrongs are eventually set right. The accounts of give and take between persons, receive renewed adjustment by the repayment of

Karmic debts and the recovery of Karmic dues. At last, out of the ripeness of experience, the soul, through the dissolution of the ego-mind, enters into the sole unity of Divine Life. In this Divine Life, there is neither the binding of giving nor the binding of taking, because the soul has completely transcended the consciousness of separateness or duality.

The drama of the continued life of the individual soul has many acts. From the point of view of the worldly existence of the soul, a curtain may be said to be drawn over its life after the closing of each act. But no

**The Analogy of
Drama**

act yields its real significance if it is taken as being self-complete in itself; it has to be taken in its wider context as being a link between the acts that have gone and the acts, which are still to come; its meaning is entwined with theme of the whole drama, of which it is a part. The end of the act is not the end of the progressive theme. The actors disappear from the stage of earth only to reappear again in new capacities and new contexts.

The actors are so engrossed in their respective roles, that they treat them as being the be-all and end-all of all existence; and for the major part of their continued life (running into innumerable incarnations) they are

**The Game of Hide
and Seek**

unconscious of the closely guarded truth that the author of the drama, in his imaginative production, himself became all the actors and played the game of hide and seek, in order to come into full and conscious possession of his own creative infinity. The infinity has to go through the illusion of finiteness to know itself as infinity; and, the author has to go through the phases of the actors, to know himself as the author of the greatest detective story worked out through the cycles of creation.

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