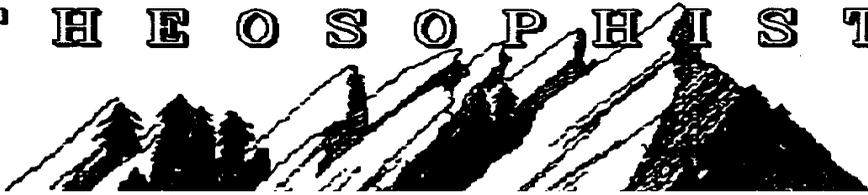


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## THEOSOPHY: ITS BENEFICENT POTENTIALITIES

by Geoffrey Farthing

2001 Blavatsky Lecture delivered at the Summer School of the Theosophical Society in England - Sunday, 29 July 2001

## INTRODUCTION

But you, Occultists, Kabbalists and Theosophists, you well know that a Word, old as the world, though new to you, has been sounded at the beginning of this cycle, and the potentiality of which, unperceived by others, lies hidden in the sum of the digits of the years 1889; you well know that a note has just been struck which has never been heard by mankind of this era; and that a New Idea is revealed, ripened by the forces of evolution. This Idea differs from everything that has been produced in the nineteenth century; it is identical, however, with the thought that has been the dominant tone and the keynote of every century, especially the last - absolute freedom of thought for humanity.

[C.W.XI, 133]

Theosophy is in its fullness a comprehensive knowledge of the nature and the workings of Nature, in which man plays a prime part. The human kingdom is a critical stage in the immense evolutionary programme when 'Man', the thinker, is born. The knowledge of Theosophy is gained by generations of trained seekers and enquirers, Initiates in the Arcane Mysteries. It claims to be an expression of Truth, the facts of existence. It is therefore not a matter of conjecture or belief. Nature herself is seen as a collectivity of all that comprises her in a series of hierarchies of living beings from the very lowliest to the highest, from the elements comprising the matter of our objective world, up the

evolutionary ladder through the kingdoms of Nature to man and beyond, into the realms of super-humanity. Theosophy postulates grades of superhuman beings which, as collective beings with their accumulated wisdom and knowledge, comprise the 'creators' and 'governors' of our planetary system.

Theosophy tells us that at the heart of all things is one common Essence. This essence manifests as 'Life'. Everything is endowed with it; there is no dead matter. Similarly everything has its degree of sentience, even if only an ability to respond to, or just 'feel', i.e., react to outside stimuli, and even memory. In its more developed forms sentience becomes consciousness. This sentiency manifests from the lowliest elemental or mineral forms, through the more complex ones of vegetable and animal, to full-blown consciousness in man. Thereafter it passes through all gradations to levels of awareness of a grandeur hardly dreamt of at our level of evolution. Because of the developed faculties and purified spiritual nature of these denizens of the highest levels of being, they may be regarded as gods. As they have developed them in themselves, so they can bequeath to man who can express them the most ennobling and compassionate impulses. These increase as the ladder of evolution is ascended.

The potentialities of Theosophy then can be thought of in terms of the ways that they affect behaviour. This is particularly the case in man himself and the whole human situation. Twelve aspects of these potentialities can readily be identified:

1. The notion of Deity in Cosmos and Man.
2. The Occult Constitution of Man and the Planes of Being.
3. Divine Law, regulating the all-embracing cosmic process.
4. Evolution, Life ever-becoming, the majes-

tic march to perfection.

5. The notion of Reincarnation, in relation to Cycles of Becoming.

6. Religion: all systems for the guidance of Man on his spiritual journey.

7. After-death states, Spiritualism and the Paranormal.

8. Ecology, a sympathetic relationship to Nature.

9. The Ordering of society: freedom within a framework of wise laws.

10. Education: the instilling of healthy values and right culture of the individual.

11. Science: man's attempts to understand the workings of Nature.

12. The Arts, Health, Psychology and Parapsychology.

Some students of Theosophy may wonder why Theosophy's grand Cosmology has not been mentioned. The Cosmology when studied in depth provides answers to many questions as to how things come to be and to be as they are, and 'things' here include those things which to us at the physical level are not only objective but subjective, pertaining to our inner natures. This Cosmology, or an acknowledgment of it, is not, however, a potentiality for the benefit of humanity ordinarily at the present time.

One of the principal potentialities of Theosophy is its explanatory nature. It provides us with an encyclopedic knowledge, data for a viable universal model or paradigm to use the language of modern science, until we can know for ourselves.

#### Potentiality One: THE NOTION OF DEITY

The notion of Deity can be regarded as Theosophy's foremost beneficent potentiality. By it, man in his inner essence, is regarded as

divine, with an inseverable relationship to the Cosmos. He is not just in it, he is of it. This is exemplified in the theosophical constitution of man, wherein all his principles reflect the cosmic planes of being.

Cosmos functions on various levels, from the physical to the highest spiritual.

The total universal process is an expression of the One Life. This is the animating dynamism behind the activities of everything. It is its life manifesting as its internal energy. It is the vast dynamic force which keeps the whole ordered process going, right from the beginning of a period of activity, i.e., the birth of the Cosmos (Manvantara), to its end when the whole mighty process subsides into rest (Pralaya) bearing with it the fruits of its immense period of activity. These fruits are the aggregate experience of countless myriads of lives that have come and gone in their season during the whole mighty process. All is garnered and stored as universal memory.

Deity is the very essence of each man's being. The influence of this idea may at first be tentative and spasmodic but it increases as goes his spiritual nature with his experiences in his long series of personal lives. He slowly becomes more or less conscious of his inner divine nature. This manifests as inspired motivation in his actions; he feels the guidance of conscience.

Concerning the notion of Deity in the creation and governance of the universe, there is a passage in The Secret Doctrine:

It [the Secret Doctrine] admits a Logos or a collective "Creator" of the Universe; a demiourgos - in the sense implied when one speaks of an "Architect" as the "Creator" of an edifice, whereas that Architect has never touched one stone of it, but, while furnishing the plan, left all the manual

labour to the masons; in our case the plan was furnished by the Ideation of the Universe, and the constructive labour was left to the hosts of intelligent Powers and Forces. But that Demiourgos is no personal deity, - i. e., an imperfect extra-cosmic god - but only the aggregate of the Dhyani-Chohans [Archangels] and the other forces.

As to the latter - They are dual in their character; being composed of (a) the irrational brute energy, inherent in matter, and (b) the intelligent soul or cosmic consciousness which directs and guides that energy, and which is the Dhyani-Chohan thought reflecting the Ideation of the Universal Mind.

[S. D. I, 279]

The Theosophical Deity is an Entity, but only in the sense of a collectivity, an aggregate of the Dhyani-Chohans, described as "the highest gods . . . the divine intelligences charged with the supervision of Kosmos".

(Theosophical Glossary)

This might cause us to think of Deity as "out there", something apart from us individually. We must, however, be mindful of the teaching in *How to Study Theosophy* (H. P. B. - The Bowen Notes) where it says (p8):

No matter what one may study in the S. D., let the mind hold fast, as the basis of its ideation, to the following ideas: a) The FUNDAMENTAL UNITY OF ALL EXISTENCE. This unity is a thing altogether different from the common notion of unit - as when we say that a nation or an army is united; or that this planet is united to that by lines of magnetic force or the

like. The teaching is not that. It is that existence is ONE THING, not any collection of things linked together. Fundamentally there is ONE BEING.

The implications of this are profound, far reaching and hard to realize, but the clear meaning is that there is not Deity and us. There is only one thing. Everything, including each human being, is that 'One Thing'. For Theosophy to become real, every student must come to this realization. What a change in perspective, in attitude towards one self, is thus engendered!

**This principle of UNITY is of greatest significance in the fields of Science, Religion, Education and Ecology.**

Unity expresses itself during manifestation as almost infinite diversity. This diversity leads to the sense of separateness in humans causing the prolific difficulties in human affairs. Eradication of the effects of these difficulties in our society is a major benefit of this Potentiality. The notion of Deity as Unity, when sufficiently realized and worked out, becomes a powerful background to our attitudes.

There is a significant corollary to the idea of Unity in the Bowen Notes (p 9(a)): The third basic idea to be held is that Man is the MICROCOSM. As he is so, then all the Hierarchies in the Heavens exist within him. **But the truth is there is neither Macrocosm nor Microcosm but ONE EXISTENCE. Great and small are such only as viewed by a limited consciousness.**

This idea should be kept in mind when studying the Constitution of Man, Potentiality Two.

## Potentiality Two: THE OCCULT STRUCTURE OF COSMOS AND MAN

In the teachings of the Great Knowledge, Theosophy, there are seven levels of cosmic being, each classified according to its characteristic nature. Of these seven one is physical, the others are non physical, inner and invisible to it. They are: first, at the highest level, Spirit (Atma) which is supreme, but without some vehicle to operate in or through it is ineffective. The next level down is that of the vehicle (Buddhi). Taken together these two levels constitute a duality, or two poles of Being, Spirit and Matter, referred to as Monad, which pass down through all levels of creation. The duality is the basis of subjectivity and objectivity manifesting in us as consciousness, and that in which consciousness can arise, i.e. form or vehicle. It is also that of which consciousness can be objectively aware.

The two aspects of the One in manifestation (the Monad) give rise to the dualities of life and form, positive and negative, active and passive, male and female, and so on. Their Essence is the ultimate universal Unity, common to every thing in existence, to all creatures including man. Their existence is according to cyclic law. Periodically they (or it, the Monad) manifest as substance or things with form, the objective side of Nature, and as inner or subjective which is motion or activity, the basis of sentience or a degree of consciousness depending on evolutionary status, i.e. the development of forms.

All activity of living things is subject to alternations of activity and rest, in breathing and out-breathing, heart beats, tide and season, and so on. These rhythms are universal. The nature of their diverse expressions depends upon the characteristics of the vehicles, the life forms, through which they function. These vehicles, in the aggregate, constitute manifest or objective

Nature, at all her levels, equals physical and non physical.

In man his Individuality (Ego), his feeling of “I”, is focussed in his mind, his thinking principle (Manas). In universal terms this is Mahat, the cosmic principle of Mind or Divine Ideation. Manas has two aspects, an upper and a lower. The upper is orientated towards the Monad, i.e., Spirit (Atma) operating through its vehicle Buddhi, and the lower is the vehicle for the normal personal thinking process. There is, however, only one mind principle but it operates at these two levels: one the divine (the Universal) and the other the personal self, during the life of a man.

Ordinarily these two aspects of mind are in effect separate, the higher affecting the lower only occasionally. The lower mind is the personal one, periodically in incarnation in distinct successive physical bodies. The higher spiritual individuality (Ego) is on a long evolutionary journey. It gathers its nurture from the purely spiritual experience of its personalities. The ordinary experiences of personal life do not contribute to it.

The personal man is four-principled. He has his lower mind (Manas), emotions (Kama), a ‘life’ principle (Prana), with its vehicle (Astral) and lastly the objective, physical body.

In the average man the personal mind is associated closely with his desires, passions, and concerns of a mundane, purely personal nature, his immediate family, his possessions, his livelihood, his social position, etc. This personal mind is his ‘tool’ for performing all the necessary functions of a mental nature, i.e., calculating, memorizing, forming judgments, coming to decisions, all necessary for his effectiveness as a person in the world.

The majority of them are not spiritual. Faculty and competence may be acquired by experience at personal level but they are of no consequence

to the development of the divine Egoic entity. Only the highest of motivations like duty, love, compassion, pity, altruistic helpfulness and so on, affecting actions, are of a spiritual nature.

This list of spiritual qualities not only reflects the nature of our divine selves but reflects into the sub-principles of our personal emotional nature. There are aspects of them in different modes at different levels of being. In their pure form they are spiritual but at personal level most of even our highest emotions are tinged with selfishness.

Below mind (Manas) the next principle is the personal emotional one: the principle of relationship to the ‘Hierarchies of the Heavens’ becomes of importance to his fuller understanding [see Bowen Notes, C. W. II, p568, and Diagram V opposite, p66]).

It is through our physical bodies, however, that normally all our activities both inner and outer express themselves. On its activities depend the significant experiences we gain from living.

Our physical bodies are living entities, composed in their entirety of hosts of subordinate lives (cells). All of them are specialised to perform the body’s various functions. Even our brains are composed of such specialised cells. One of the secrets for the proper understanding of the functioning of our brains is that they, and even each of their constituent cells, like us, have their principles in the invisible worlds. Each cell of our body is a living thing, very importantly with its own consciousness and memory (and even will). It has its counterpart in the Astral and, whether active or dormant, at even higher levels of being, i.e., the emotional, mental and spiritual. Obviously also the cells are suffused with the life energies which sustain and animate our physical bodies.

Through the inner subjective realms we are given some understanding of ourselves otherwise unknown to us. For example, they provide data for a more comprehensive system of psychology, relating us not only to emotional but to mental and spiritual levels, right up to the divine.

These principles of man are seen as reflections of the seven cosmic planes. By analogy, “as above, so below”; man’s total being in all respects is the same as that of the Universe. He is a microcosm to its Macrocosm. As everything in Cosmos is living, the planes are constituted of lives which in turn are members of an ascending Hierarchy. Overriding all these various aspects of being is that of Unity, never to be overlooked or forgotten by the student.

(2 See Appendix for the Occult Constitution of Man as given in *The Key to Theosophy*, pp 22, 91, 175, Original Edition).

### Potentiality Three: DIVINE LAW

All of us are born at a certain time to certain parents living in a certain place in a certain country. We are of a certain nationality and religion and come into the world endowed with certain personal gifts or deficiencies, as a male or a female, born into a house of riches or poverty, to parents of culture and refinement or the very opposite. This place we are born into is somewhere on the surface of the planet.

When we are old enough we will look into the heavens and see something there of the endless spaces and something of the multitudes of stars. When we are even older maybe we will discover the enormity of those spaces. We will learn that the whole vast scheme of things has been going for unimaginable ages in terms of earth years. But there it all is, now; in some miraculous way the whole boundless plane, periodically

“the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing . . .” (See S. D .I. Proem), has survived.

1. The Ancient Wisdom teaching is that both our private individual affairs and those of the boundless universe are all ordered according to universal or divine law. When the law is applied to human beings particularly it is referred to as the Law of Karma, but it is nevertheless always an aspect of the universal Divine Law, of which H. P. B. has this to say: . . .

We consider it as the Ultimate Law of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, Karma is that unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable, its action is perceivable. [Key, 201. Original Edition]

Its action is the endless flow of events through time, with everything in that flow determined by what went before. In this sense the law is that of causation, of action and also of effect. Everything in the Cosmos, including ourselves, is an effect of causes generated in the past. All our actions become causes for future effects. Just as the universe and everything in it persists for periods of time long enough for everything in it to perform its function in the total process, so men, animals and plants live long enough to fulfil their part in the scheme of things. In the case of man this period is variable depending on many factors, such as state

of health and so on, but those factors themselves are the effects of causes set up in the past.

The teaching says quite unequivocally that according to law we and our circumstances are all determined as a comprehensive result of what we have done in the past. What we have done includes our relationships with other people: our immediate families, our relations, our religious group, our nation, our race. All of these in themselves generate their own Karma to which to an extent we are all heirs. Although we are all responsible for what befalls us in life, this is not wholly dependent on our own doings but on those of the groups to which we belong. Again according to the Law the circumstances of our birth and our parents are all predetermined, so is our physical constitution with a tendency to, or an immunity from, certain diseases.

The beneficent aspect of this potentiality is its perfect justice. The law takes account of the degree of our immaturity and of our motives for whatever we do. The Karmic effects of a child's actions will be different from those of similar acts performed by a responsible adult.

This may be difficult to understand as it is said that the Law adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause. How can a universal law be wise or intelligent? The answer is in the livingness of everything, be it the life of a sub-atomic particle or of a great being. The essential beingness of all things is not in their objective but in their interior state, in the subjective worlds.

The great beings who, so to speak, operate the Law are collective beings, aggregates in terms of consciousness, knowledge and experience of many, many lives at all levels of development. They do, however, manifest a unit intelligence or a single consciousness, at a level commensurate with their development. These great beings function through subordinate entities on a lower hierarchical levels who in their turn constitute

the ordering principle of the universe. Their aggregate action is the Law in operation, but they are themselves subject to it. By the continuous cycle of Nature's processes these beings are heirs to a vast experience extending back into unimaginable epochs of time. It is this accumulated experience that conditions or regulates their actions in the ordering of things. They are the agents of the Law, or of the laws to which Nature in all its collective activities subscribes.

The certain operations of the Law, in which we are inescapably involved, gives us an unshakable assurance that in the end all will be well. As an old hymn says, "God is working his purpose out", and according to the Ancient Wisdom that purpose is the evolutionary process for everything, a journey to perfection by stages. We are part of that process.

Again, an immediate aspect of the Law for each of us is not only this confidence that all will be well but it bestows self-reliance and responsibility on each of us. In the light of it, insofar as we can accept it, we become mature beings, knowingly playing our part in Nature's endless progressive journey. A significant insight applying the Law to the human condition is the following:

Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways - which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate, while another sees in them the action of blind Fatalism, and a third, simple chance, with neither gods nor devils to guide them - would surely disappear, if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction

that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the two-thirds of the World's evil would vanish into thin air. Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the "ways of Providence". [S. D. I, 643]

#### Potentiality Four: EVOLUTION, LIFE EVER-BECOMING

The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life. There is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces. The whole process of evolution with its endless adaptation is a proof of this. The immutable laws that weed out the weak and feeble species, to make room for the strong, and which ensure the "survival of the fittest", though so cruel in their immediate action - all are working toward the grand end. The very fact that adaptations do occur, that the fittest do survive in the struggle for existence, shows that what is called "unconscious Nature" is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals) guided by High Planetary Spirits (Dhyani-Chohans), whose collective aggregate forms the manifested verbum of the unmanifested LOGOS, and constitutes at one and the same time the MIND of the Universe and its

immutable LAW. [S. D. I, 277/8]

In the spiritual realms of being the life process is continuous and virtually everlasting but all the forms that life uses or inhabits, from mineral up to human, are only temporary and must necessarily have an end. Ends, however, are always followed by beginnings in the continuous but cyclic process.

[Reflect on the Realization of Impermanence by the Great Beings, hct Vol.17 No. 1 Jan/Feb 2002, page 1]

In Potentiality Two we saw man in a direct relationship with the universe. His existence, as is that of every thing, is subject to law, and an aspect of the Law is the evolutionary process. The process has many aspects, all beneficent in their way. They work in their own time and involve factors relating to the inner worlds not yet recognized in modern philosophies. The problems of evil involve universal balance and the Law's cause and effect aspect. Every thing in existence is as it is as a result of what went before. Always there are antecedents to everything.

The human lifespan is variable. It is a cycle within a greater cycle in the graded evolutionary process. The progress of the whole human kingdom depends, in the aggregate, on the efforts made by, and the achievements of, its members. These are of infinite variety: they include, for example, a wide range of mental processes at one level, down to the most humdrum physical work, all of which are necessary for the survival of the race. These activities result in rich experience, the fruit of living. The aggregate of individual experience is that of the race. As the race persists, so is this experience on-going and is accumulated and stored in the cosmic memory.

Much experience is in terms of relation-

ships, either between individuals or between the individual and the environment. In theosophical terms both kinds are complex because of their effects in the inner worlds, in man particularly on his inner principles, all of which are modified by experience. Everything in Nature also has its inner principles, more or less developed and active, or dormant.

Evolution is the process of the ever-improvement of life forms to fit themselves to express more and more of the potentialities of spirit. Improving forms are in effect the development of the Monad. By its nature the Monad, reflecting the absolute in existence, or as the One Manifest, does not change or grow. It is the forms that it energizes or animates, and through which it expresses or manifests its own unlimited characteristics or qualities, that have to grow or expand both in size and complexity. All Nature has its 'form' aspect; its spirit is 'Life' itself.

The mere exigencies of existence ensure that in the long run, in due season, forms do grow, expand, develop, in all the ways that are necessary. This growth is accomplished by accumulating experience on the one hand, and 'effort' on the other. Living forms develop by effort; muscles grow thereby, so do minds. Both need exercise.

In our opening paragraph to this Potentiality the phrase "survival of the fittest" is used. It is significant and contains a lesson for us all. It is by survival that the process of adaptations can work. This process applies to us all. The moral is that we are here in earth life, life after life, to learn, passively by experience and often suffering but actively by making effort in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Easy lives are unproductive in the evolutionary sense. Having had this pointed out to us the rest is up to us.

## Potentiality Five: REINCARNATION

The immortal spiritual Egoic principle in the occult constitution of man is a key factor in the understanding of reincarnation: this is, however, not generally recognized. Reincarnation is commonly understood to mean a return to earth of a deceased personality, a rebirth of that same person, a kind of resurrection. The theosophical teachings correct and amplify this popular view. Reincarnation and its associated Law of Karma was dealt with by H. P. Blavatsky in one of her essays: If Theosophy prevailing in the struggle, its all-embracing philosophy strikes deep root into the minds and hearts of men, if its doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma, in other words, of Hope and Responsibility, find a home in the lives of the new generations, then, indeed, will dawn the day of joy and gladness for all who now suffer and are outcast. For real Theosophy is ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possession, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then, the GOLDEN AGE will be there indeed. [C. W. XI, 202]

This passage refers to Reincarnation and Karma as doctrines of Hope and Responsibility. Elsewhere H. P. B/ refers to them as the twin doctrines. The one cannot be properly understood without the other. We dealt with Karma under Potentiality Three, the Law, which has a number of aspects all more or less relating

to that of cause and effect. Successive personalities are the effects of causes set up by their immediate predecessors and possibly those before that.

But what is the process of reincarnation? It is the flow of 'Life' through a series of successive temporary forms. The process is continuous but alternately passive and active. It applies to the largest of manifest things, e.g. universes, down to the very smallest, e.g., sub-atomic particles. Everything has a period of existence and a period of withdrawal, but there is THAT which continues through both states, LIFE itself, everlasting Essence or Spirit.

Man is regarded as essentially a unit of the Universal Spirit, an Ego or Individuality. At intervals of a few millennia of earth time (variable with circumstances) this Spiritual Entity projects into the physical world by a complicated process of rebirth a new personality. Each personality is linked to its predecessor by a number of "hereditary" factors which condition the new one from birth, and each personality has an allotted life span of a relatively short duration (commonly 70 to 80 years).

During each life the personality is subject to Karma, even to his/her inherited characteristics. In a lifetime the personality gains many experiences, then eventually dies. Life experience is said to be of two kinds, personal and spiritual. The purely personal becomes a hereditary factor in the conditioning of later personalities. The spiritual is separated out after death and is assimilated by the spiritual Individuality during a very long inter-life period in an unalloyed blissful subjective state.

The importance of a person's realization of his/her essential divine nature is much stressed in theosophical literature. If it can become a consciously recognized fact in our lives it affects every aspect of our behaviour for the

better. As H.P.B. has expressed it, it humanises the otherwise animal man.

Reincarnation, as far as man is concerned, is the modus operandi of the vast evolutionary journey that we are all engaged in. Against a background knowledge of the reincarnation process death can be seen in perspective. This can reflect into the making of very different decisions. For example, in the case of brain damaged patients on life-support machines, what is the purpose of our striving to keep physical bodies alive beyond their useful conscious lifespan? Similarly we are casting doubt on the usefulness of much vivisection research and other cruelties inflicted on animals to produce medicines. Our bodies may be kept alive for a period longer than if we did not take animal-tested drugs, but in the light of reincarnation and Karma is such a practice justified?

The teaching tells us of a virtually endless progressive unfoldment of the potentialities of spirit. These reflect into the personalities which are also progressively developing, manifesting as they do more and more of the qualities of the divine Essence. Personalities are also on a journey to perfection, by stages, culminating in their complete spiritual regeneration.

These stages are marked by the progressive unfoldment of proper human faculties with their expression on one hand in the personality's living, its relationships, attitudes and actions and on the other in an expanding consciousness. The person becomes increasingly sensible of the spiritual powers. As he grows, so he becomes aware of the fact that he is inseparably linked with whatever beings there are at those high levels.

All these great ideas must surely give us a vision or a hope for our future that we could never otherwise have had. Our responsibility is to discover the ways and means, according to the Law, of realizing them. ...

## THE CONTENT OF THE SUTRA

*The Sutra on the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings* contains eleven essential subjects for meditation. I (author) will discuss these subjects along with the eight realizations.

1. The first realization explains and clarifies the four basic subjects of Buddhist meditation: (a) impermanence, (b) suffering, (c) no-self, and (d) impurity. We must always remember and meditate on these four principles of reality. As mentioned in the sutra, if someone meditates on these facts, he or she will gradually be released from *samsara*, the round of birth and death.

a. Impermanence - the impermanent nature of all things: From moment to moment, all things in this world, including human life, mountains and rivers, and political systems, are in constant transformation. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world.

b. Suffering - the emptiness of all things: The ancient people of India said that all things are composed of four elements: earth, air, water, and fire. Acknowledging this, buddhas and bodhisattvas understand that when there is a harmonious relationship among the four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is suffering.

Because all things are created by a combination of these elements, nothing can exist independently or permanently. All things are impermanent. Consequently, when we are caught up in the

things of the world, we suffer from their impermanent nature. And since all things are empty, when we are caught by things, we also suffer from their emptiness. Awareness of the existence of suffering leads us to begin to practice the way of realization. This is the first of the Four Noble Truths.<sup>8</sup> When we lose awareness of and do not meditate on the existence of suffering in all things, we can easily be pushed around by passions and desires for worldly things, increasingly destroying our lives in the pursuit of these desires. Only by being aware of suffering can we find its cause, confront it directly, and eliminate it.

c. Selflessness - the nature of our bodies: Buddhism teaches that human beings are composed of five aggregates, called *skandhas* in Sanskrit. If the form created by the four elements is empty and without self, then human beings, created by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. Human beings are involved in a transformation process from second to second, minute to minute, continually experiencing impermanence in each moment. By looking very deeply into the five *skandhas*, we can experience the selfless nature of our bodies, our passage through birth and death, and emptiness, thereby destroying the illusion that our bodies are permanent. In Buddhism, no self is the most important subject for meditation. By meditating on no-self, we can break through the barrier between self and other. When we no longer are separate from the universe, a completely harmonious existence with the universe is created. We see that all other human beings exist in us and that we exist in all other human beings. We see that the past and the future are contained in the present moment, and we can penetrate and be

completely liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

d. Impurity- the nature of our bodies and minds: Impurity means the absence of an immaculate state of being, one that is neither holy nor beautiful. From the psychological and physiological standpoint, human beings are impure. This is not negative or pessimistic, but an objective perspective on human beings. If we examine the constituents of our bodies from the hair on our head to the blood, pus, phlegm, excrement, urine, the many bacteria dwelling in the intestines, and the many diseases present waiting for the opportunity to develop, we can see clearly that our bodies are quite impure and subject to decay. Our bodies also create the motivation to pursue the satisfaction of our desires and passions. That is why the sutra regards the body as the place where misdeeds gather.

Let us now consider our psychological state. Since we are unable to see the truth of impermanence, suffering, and the selfless nature of all things, our minds often become the victims of greed and hatred, and we act wrongly. So the sutra says, “The mind is the source of all confusion.”

2. “More desire brings more suffering” is the basis of the second realization. Most people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires. There are five types of desire.<sup>9</sup> These desires are boundless but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we continue to pursue their complete fulfillment, and we create more suffering. Even when a desire is fulfilled, we suffer when its fulfillment terminates. It is only after we become completely exhausted from this incessant pursuit that we begin to realize the extent to which we were caught in the insatiable net of desires

and passions. Then we can realize that true happiness is really a peaceful state of body and mind, and this can only exist when our desires are few. Having few desires and not seeking fulfillment through the pursuit of the five desires are great steps towards liberation.

3. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions destroys desire and greed. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind, have more time to help others, and be free to realize the highest goal: the development of concentration and understanding to attain realization. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions helps us avoid buying unnecessarily and becoming part of an economic system that exploits others, and it enables us to decrease our involvement in the pollution of our environment.

4. Diligent practice destroys laziness. After we cease looking for joy in desires and passions and know how to feel satisfied with few possessions, we must not be lazy, letting days and months slip by neglectfully. Great patience and diligence are needed continually to develop our concentration and understanding in the endeavor of self-realization. We must use all of our time to meditate on the four truths of impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and impurity, the first four subjects of meditation. We must penetrate deeply into the profound meaning of The Four Foundations of Mindfulness,<sup>10</sup> practicing, studying, and meditating on the postures and cycles (becoming, maturing, transformation, and destruction) of our bodies, as well as our feelings, sensations, mental

formations, and consciousness. We should read sutras and other writings which explain meditation-correct sitting and controlling the breath, such as *The Satipatthana Sutta* and *The Maha Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra*. We have to follow the teachings of these sutras and practice them in an intelligent way, choosing the methods which best apply to our own situation. As necessary, we can modify the methods suggested in order to accommodate our own needs. Our energy must also be regulated until all the basic desires and passions-greed, anger, narrow-mindedness, arrogance, doubt, and preconceived ideas-are uprooted. At this time we will know that our bodies and minds are liberated from the imprisonment of birth and death, the five *skandhas*, and the three worlds.

5. Concentration and understanding destroy narrow mindedness. Among the basic desires and passions, narrow-mindedness has the deepest roots. When these roots are loosened, all other desires and passions, greed, anger, doubt, and preconceived ideas-are also uprooted. Knowing this, we can make a great effort to meditate on the truths of impermanence, no-self, and the dependent origination of all things. Once the roots of ignorance are severed, we can not only liberate ourselves, but also teach others to break through the imprisonment of birth and death.

The first four subjects of meditation are to help us attain liberation. The next four subjects have the aim of helping others attain liberation, thus clearly and solidly uniting Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist thought.

6. When practicing generosity, we should consider everyone equal. Some people think that they can only practice generosity if they are wealthy. This is not

true. Some people who are very wealthy do practice generosity, but many give alms with the aim of gaining merit, profiting, or pleasing others. People whose lives are grounded in compassion are seldom rich, because they share whatever they have with others. They are not willing to enrich their lives financially at the cost of others' poverty. Many people misunderstand the Buddhist expression "practicing generosity" to mean casually giving five or ten cents of the presence of people like these. They do not practice generosity by giving money which they do not possess, but rather by giving their time, energy, love, and care-their entire lives.

Practicing generosity in a Buddhist context means not to discriminate against anyone. Even though among the poor and destitute there are cruel persons and kind persons, we must not exclude the cruel ones from our practice. Because poverty brings anger and hatred, poor people are more inclined to create evil. As the sutra states, "Bodhisattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings, nor do they hate even those who are presently doing evil." This expresses the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism. Poverty creates anger, hatred, and wrongdoings. If we teach Buddhist philosophy through lectures, but do not practice generosity to ease the suffering of others, we have not yet attained the essence of Buddhism. We should practice generosity with compassion and not disdain, without discriminating against people who, because of their poverty, have caused anger and hatred.

7. While living in society, we should not be defiled by it. We must live in harmony with society in order to help others, without being caught by the five desires, living like the lotus flower which blooms in the mud and yet remains pure

and unstained. Practicing the way of liberation does not mean avoiding society, but helping in it. Before our capacity to help becomes strong and solid, we may be defiled by living in society. For this reason, Bodhisattvas meditate on the detrimental nature of the five desires and firmly decide to live simply in order to practice generosity without discrimination. Thus, living in society and not being stained by it is to practice the six paramitas.

8. We should create in ourselves the firm decision to help others. We must make a deep and solemn vow to overcome the difficulties, dangers, and suffering that may occur while helping others. Since the suffering in society is limitless, the willingness and devotion to practice the way of helping others must also be limitless. Thus, the Mahayana spirit is an endless source of energy which inspires us to practice generosity without discrimination. With the Mahayana spirit, we can withstand the many challenges and humiliations encountered in society and be able to continue to practice the Way. This will bring great happiness to others. Only with the Mahayana spirit can we realize the following topics taught by the *Po Lun San Mei Lu* (Vietnamese: *Bao Vuong Tam Muoi Sastra*):

1. While meditating on the body, do not hope or pray to be exempt from sickness. Without sickness, desires and passions can easily arise.

2. While acting in society, do not hope or pray not to have any difficulties. Without difficulties, arrogance can easily arise.

3. While meditating on the mind, do not hope or pray not to encounter hindrances. Without hindrances, present knowledge will not be challenged or broadened.

4. While working, do not hope or pray not to encounter obstacles. Without obstacles, the vow to help others will deepen.

5. While developing a plan, do not hope or pray to achieve success easily. With easy success, arrogance can easily arise.

6. While interacting with others, do not hope or pray

#### PRACTICING AND OBSERVING THE SUTRA AFTERWORD

To practice and observe *The Sutra on the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings*, choose a time when your body and mind are completely relaxed, for example after taking a comfortable bath. You can begin by lighting a stick of incense to give the room a pleasant fragrance. Then, take the sutra and slowly read it to discover its deepest meanings. Relate the words of the sutra to your own life experiences. It is through your own life experiences that you can understand any sutra's content and not through someone else's explanation of it.

Each time you sit in meditation, thoroughly examine each subject of the sutra. The more you meditate on each subject, the more deeply you will discover the profound wisdom contained in the sutra. It would be helpful for you to also read other sutras, such as *The Anapanasati Sutta of Mindfulness on Breathing* and *The Satipatthana Sutta*. Both are profound and concise works which will complement *The Sutra on the Eight Realizations*. These two sutras explain in practical detail how to progress step-by-step towards realization. If you combine the method of following and relaxing your breathing, as described in these two

sutras, with meditation on the eleven subjects described in *The Sutra on the Eight Realizations*; you will easily succeed in achieving your aim of realizing your own self-nature.

The content of *The Sutra on the Eight Realizations* is grounded in both Mahayana and Theravada viewpoints. Please treasure this sutra. When I was seventeen, and in my first year of novice studies at a Buddhist Monastery, I had to study and memorize it. This enabled me to easily combine the meaning of the Sutra with the meditation of breath counting. From this period until now, 44 years have passed and this Sutra is still an invaluable torch lighting my path. Today I have the opportunity to present it to you. I am grateful to this deep and miraculous Sutra. I join my hands and respectfully recite, "Homage to the precious *Sutra on the Eight Realizations*. ..."

Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Sutra On The Eight Realizations of the Great Beings*. 1978.

We decided to include the commentary on last month's topic, identified above. We feel it is important as a basis for a later study of Purucker's "Paramitas and the Eight Fold Path," in *The Esoteric Path: Its Nature and its Tests*. [Ed. HCT]

WILLY SCHMIT WRITES FROM THE HAGUE

JANUARY 3, 2002

Dear Marty and Richard,

When you rang me up some weeks ago I had the feeling as if I had acquired two friends, your voices sounded so familiar to me.

As promised I made a summary of the story of the Grand Inquisitor. I'll try and give you the promised information about our theosophical work.

Our work, that is to say the work of the "school for the Study and Promulgation of the Esoteric Philosophy" has the same background and working method as Emmett's. That is to say, we follow the Blavatsky and Point Loma tradition, adhering strictly to the teachings as H.P. Blavatsky gave and which she received from her Teachers, and as faithfully continued by her successors, W.Q. Judge, Katherine Tingley and G. de Purucker.

The founder of the School is J.H. Venema, the National President of the Dutch branch of the Theosophical Society at the time of G. de Purucker. Afterwards, after the split three years after the death of G. de Purucker, he founded the school.

During his whole long life J.H. Venema has been very successful in his work for Theosophy; he gave innumerable public talks about Theosophy and about the religions and philosophies such as those of India and other countries. Thanks to his gifts as a poet he knew to inspire his listeners. The same inspiration he gave with his exposition about the Welsh mythology, especially as interpreted by his great friend Kenneth Morris, Above that he could explain the deeper sources of Shakespeare's works or the significance of Egypt's mythology. He wrote two sublime books: "Arjuna" - about the Bhagavad Gita

and “The Magic Key” theosophical teachings illustrated by tales. He wrote a lot of elucidating articles and two bundles of poetry. He was a real teacher to us, always aiming at the intuition of his pupils. He was befriended with many of Point Loma, of Katherine Tingley and G. de Purucker (whose talks he translated when they were in Holland) as well as with all surrounding these two Leaders.

In this vein we have tried to work, not with “The cold brainmind” as he so often said, but from within. As times have changed-after this period of activity, we have now small study-groups, without any necessity of membership, only with the request of studying. These regular studies are the best method of receiving a good, overall understanding of the teachings, enlightened with the help of all kinds of side lights.

Further activities are our support of the Rotterdam Theosophical Society by attending their public meetings, giving lectures when required and all other support.

As we are also a Branch of Point Loma Publications we have published translated books from Point Loma, such as “What Death Really Is” and “The Wisdom of the heart”. It is a pleasure that these translations are finding their sales in theosophical organizations.

Our main interest is to contact individual theosophists all over the world, such as we have in Germany and the United States. These are the small but sparkling lights that can spread over the globe.

In the meantime I have received the last two numbers of your periodical, and I sincerely hope that I can be useful to you in one or another form.

With all the best wishes for the New Year, with kind regards,

## THE GRAND INQUISITOR

The “Grand Inquisitor” is a chapter from the book “The Brothers Karamazov” by the Russian author Dostoyevsky and it is, according to Mahatma K.H. “the most forcible and true description of the Society of Jesus that was ever given before.” (Letter No. 27 from “The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett”).

The story takes place in the 15th century in Spain, during the most horrible time of the Inquisition, when in the whole country thousands were burnt at the stake every day in honour of God.

In Jesus arises the desire to appear to the people; this tormented, suffering, disgustingly sinning people, that childishly loves him, however. He appears in Sevilla, where the day before an auto da fe has been held with pomp and circumstance, when a hundred heretics were burnt together. He came silently and unnoticed, but in a moment all recognised Him. He performs some wonders when the Cardinal, the Great Inquisitor, an old man of nearly ninety, crosses the square when passing the church, having noticed everything that happened. He orders his guard to take Him captive and Jesus is taken to an old, dark dungeon of the Holy Tribunal.

The day passes, followed by the dark, silent night of Sevilla. Amidst the deep darkness the iron door of the prison suddenly opens and the old Grand Inquisitor enters. He is alone, the door closes behind him. Met stops on the threshold and looks his prisoner in the face for some minutes, approaching him softly and asking him: “Is it you? You?” But he gets no answer. Then follows the long, penetrating story about the work of the Society of Jesus, told by the Grand Inquisitor. At the end the latter informs Jesus that he will be burnt at the stake tomorrow morning, because Jesus has disturbed their work, that has almost come to its successful end.

However, Jesus does not say a word, looking only intently and softly in the eyes of the old man, who wants a reply. Suddenly Jesus approaches the old man and kisses him on the bloodless thin lips.

That was his answer. The old man is startled; there is a light trembling in the corners of his mouth, he goes to the door, opens it and says: "Go away and never come back.... never.... never.... never.... never." Then he releases his prisoner in the dark streets of the town and Jesus goes away. The kiss burns in the heart of the old man, but he holds on to his conviction.

The long justification of the policy of the Society of Jesus, given by the Grand Inquisitor, contains some fifteen pages of the book. It is really a splendid exposition of the delusions of zealotry. H.P. Blavatsky writes in her article "The Grand Inquisitor" (Blavatsky Collected Writings Vol. III, pp. 324/5): "The extract translated constitutes a great satire on modern theology generally and the Roman Catholic religion in particular. The idea is that Christ revisits earth, coming to Spain at the period of the Inquisition, and it is at once arrested as a heretic by the Grand Inquisitor." As the Master says: "There is a mighty lesson contained in it for many and even you (Sinnott) may profit by it."

#### **A SUBSCRIBER WRITES:**

"We have no control of our lives because of karma, yet, we are responsible for our actions which cause future karma. It contradicts itself. Please explain."

Our response:

First, it is an error to think we have no control of our lives because of karma. We have "total" control of our lives, and yet, our karma will be what it will be. It is through our free will that we can act appropriately at every moment.

"As man is a creature born with a

free will and endowed with reason, whence spring all his notions of right and wrong, he does not per se represent any definite moral ideal. The conception of morality in general relates first of all to the object or motive, and only then to the means or modes of action."

*Mahatma Letter 28*

We have total control over how we perceive our lives and we react accordingly. This is why we must do our sadhana. The more we can clean up our act the more dharmic our choices. It is true we can not stop the karmic actions that are to be in place within our lives, but we do not have to react from the 'ego' perspective. We watch; we learn; we act.

Second, it is our reactions and identification as the "doer" that causes the future karma. This is a hard one to understand because just saying: "I'm not doing anything, I'm going to watch it," is still identifying with the action. So, where do we go from here?

It (Karma) exists from and in Eternity, truly, for it is ETERNITY itself; and as such, since no act can be co-equal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it is ACTION itself. It is not the Wave which drowns a man, but the *personal* action of the wretch, who goes deliberately and places himself under the impersonal action of the laws that govern the Ocean's motion. Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plans and creates causes, and Karmic law adjusts the effects; which adjustment is not an act, but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigor. If it happens to dislocate the arm that tried to

bend it out of its natural position, shall we say that it is the bough which broke our arm, or that our own folly has brought us to grief?

Karma has never sought to destroy intellectual and individual liberty, like the God invented by the Monotheists. It has not involved its decrees in darkness purposely to perplex man; nor shall it punish him who dares to scrutinise its mysteries. On the contrary, he who unveils through study and meditation its intricate paths, and throws light on those dark ways, in the windings of which so many men perish owing to their ignorance of the labyrinth of life, is working for the good of his fellow-men. Karma is an Absolute and Eternal law in the World of manifestation; and as there can only be one Absolute, as One eternal ever present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as Atheists or materialists - still less as fatalists for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it is an aspect in its effects in the phenomenal world.

*HPB "Secret Doctrine Vol II" page 305-6*

Krishna said to Arjuna:

‘If you have no capacity for study, then it is better to continue being what you are. Do not restrain the senses, do not interfere with the enjoyment of sense objects. You have the liberty of freely following your own course. Only do not say “I am doing it,” whatever may be the action you perform through the agency of your body, tongue, and mind.’

Does the chariot ever worry if the road is straight or crooked? Whatever action is performed, dedicate all quietly to Me. With such conviction of mind you will come unto

Me, the Home of the union of the Supreme and individual soul.”

*(Siddha Yoga Correspondence Course)*

So it seems as though we must first know what is the dharmic action and this is why we study Theosophy; this is why we want to know about the universe. Who are we? Where are we going? What is our role? However, that is not enough, we must also act. Knowledge is useless if we can not put it to practice. This is why we must do Sadhana. We need to have the practices down so that Dharma becomes our True second nature.

Our higher mind is the organ of free will:

“At any moment we are free to begin an entirely new mode of thinking, new relations with others, and a new direction in our lives --an “inner” direction which, in itself, is the pith and marrow of Esotericism. This U-turn in consciousness, from outward pursuits to inner realities, is what is meant by the Greek word “metanoia” in the Bible: not repentance as this word is commonly interpreted in English. The animal form remains, but its indwelling eternal principle shines through unimpeded. This is the mystery of the animal man made Divine.”

Unable to verify HPB. source. [Ed.HCT]

A continuation discussion on lineages\karma\destiny

We could go on and on with the discussion about Karma and Theosophy. Karma is one of the main principles that the Masters wanted

the West to understand. But what about its linkage to destiny?

... All sin has its origin in the mind. The more the mind dwells on any course of conduct, whether with pleasure or pain, the less chance there is for it to become detached from such action. The manas (mind) is the knot of the heart, and when that is untied from any object, or when the mind loses its interest in any object, there will no longer be a link between the Karma connected with that object and the individual.

It is the attitude of the mind which draws the Karmic cords tightly round the soul. It imprisons the aspirations and binds them with chains of difficulty and obstruction. It is desire that causes the past Karma to take form and shape and build the house of clay. It must be through non-attachment that the soul will burst through the walls of pain, it will be only through a change of mind that the Karmic burden will be lifted.

It will appear, therefore, that although absolutely true that action brings its own result, "there is no destruction here of actions good or not good. Coming to one body after another they become ripened in their respective ways." - Yet this ripening is the act of the individual. Free will of man asserts itself and he becomes his own savior. To the worldly man Karma is a stern Nemesis, to the spiritual man Karma unfolds itself in harmony with his highest aspirations. He will look with tranquility alike on past and future, neither dwelling with remorse on past sin nor living in expectation of reward for present action.

*Judge. Echoes of the Orient.* vol. 1, page 28

... The author [William Q. Judge] here wishes to show that there is sweetness and light in occultism, and not merely a wide dry level of dreadful Karma, such as some Theosophists are prone to dwell on. And this sweetness and light may be reached when we discover the iron bar and raising it shall permit the heart to be free. This iron bar is what the Hindus call "The knot of the heart!" In their scriptures they talk of unloosing this knot, and say that when that is accomplished freedom is near. But what is the iron bar and the knot? That is the question we must answer. It is the astringent power of self - of egotism - of the idea of separateness. This idea has many strongholds. It holds its most secret court and deepest counsels near the far removed depths and the center of the heart. But it manifests itself first, in that place which is nearest to our ignorant perceptions, where we see it first after beginning the search. When we assault and conquer it there it disappears. It has only retreated to the next row of outworks where for a time it appears not to our sight, and we imagine it killed, while it is laughing at our imaginary conquests and security. Soon again we find it and conquer it again, only to have it again retreat. So we must follow it up if we wish to grasp it at last in its final stand just near the "kernel of the heart." ... The great difficulty of rushing at once to the center lies in the unimaginable terrors which assault the soul on its short journey there. This being so it is better to begin the battle on the outside ... by testing experience and learning from it.

*Judge. Echoes of the Orient.* Vol.1 page 36.

Another point that co-editor's current Siddha Yoga Correspondence Lesson covers is on Past and Future.

What we call "past" and "future" are only states of the mind. What we call "time" is only a sequence of motion or change. We may think we are growing older, but nothing is really growing older at all. ... The body changes according to its own karma and our predominant and habitual thoughts and feelings, which determine physical expression, posture, the projected vitality into any moment, and the vibrations which make us unique as an individual. The main thing is how free we are in our own mind.

*Siddha Yoga Correspondence Course*

This is supported by a subscriber's comment:

"To my understanding the present is the past and future all rolled up in the moment. As we use the moment so we move the future upward or "downwards". We need not be overwhelmed with the Karma of the past, but in facing it now with courage and trust in our inner resources we modify its impact, and can even redirect its energy for the better. Meanwhile we set up new causes which build better effects in the times to come. If we watch our line of motive, and not worry too much over the results the Good Law will adjust those effects accordingly."

(A Fellow Student of Theosophy)

The Correspondence Course goes on to talk about the subtle body.

... The mind and emotional nature go with the subtle body. Memory goes with the subtle body. Ego goes with the subtle body

Our karma then lies in the subtle body. This is why we do the practices of opening up the Buddhi. However, having said that, it now becomes: "Thus I have heard." We are all still students.

Relevant questions written to WQJ:

*Is there a wide difference between Karma and destiny?*

WQJ: Destiny is the English word applied to a Karma so strong and overpowering that its action cannot be counteracted by other Karma; but in the sense that all happenings are under Karma, then all things are destined as they occur.

Men have always found that some events were so inevitable that, for want of knowledge of the law of Karma, they have said, "These things were destined."

But when we grasp the meaning of Karma, we see that *destiny* is only the working out in action of causes so powerful that no act of ours and no other sort of Karma could by any possibility either avert or modify the result.

This view does not conflict with what some call the "immutable decrees of Karma," because those decrees are the resultant of numerous Karmic factors, the absence, nullification, or postponement of anyone of which would change the supposable result.

If, however, we imagine that our life today is only that due to past Karma from a previous incarnation, we make the error leading to a belief in destiny or fate.

But as we are experiencing the effects of Karma from this life as well as from many previous ones, it follows that the events in a man's life are due to the *balancing* of Karmic causes.

Judge. *Echoes of the Orient* Vol II. page 257

*In some formerly published articles something is said of a future date marking the withdrawal of certain portions of the influence of the Adepts, and that those who have not often passed the obstacles before, will have to wait until the next incarnation. Is it necessary that one should be aware of having passed sufficiently far; must one be conscious of it? If so, I, for one, am "not in it."*

WQJ: It is not necessary to be conscious of the progress one has made.

Nor is the date in any sense an extinguisher, as some have styled it. In these days we are too prone to wish to know everything all at once especially in relation to ourselves. It may be desirable and encouraging to be conscious, but it is not necessary.

We make a good deal of progress in our inner, hidden life of which we are not at all conscious.

We may not know it until some later life. ... It is best to go on with duty, and to refrain from this trying to take stock and measuring of progress. All of our progress is in the inner nature, and not in the physical where lives the brain, and

from which the present question comes.

The apparent physical progress is evanescent. It is ended when the body dies, at which time, if the inner man has not been allowed to guide us, the natural record against us will be a cipher, or "failure."

Now, as the great Adepts live in the plane of our inner nature, it must follow that they might be actively helping every one of us after the date referred to, and we, as physical brain men, not be conscious of it on this plane.

Judge. *Echoes of the Orient*. Vol II. page 416

So, what is destined?

Well, birth and death are definitely destined. In HPB's case, she was destined to be a server for the Theosophical Society, although she was asked if she would be willing. I wonder where our free will plays here. I guess we can reject our destiny or can we?

The co-editor sees an analogy with her knee. The doctors say that her Osteoarthritic knee is destined to be replaced at some point. It can be stalled by following the proper procedures: eat right foods, keep the weight down, exercise with the right exercises, rest it when needed, take proper medicines, etc., but who knows? She may die first or they may find a different solution. There is so much we don't know but does it really matter?

SECRET DOCTRINE QUESTION AND  
ANSWER SECTION  
CONDUCTED BY GEOFFREY A.  
BARBORKA

*Readers of The Canadian Theosophist are invited to participate in this feature by sending their questions c/o The Editors to be forwarded to Mr. Barborka.*

*Question.* What is meant by “Spirits of this Planet” as written in *The Secret Doctrine*, as for instance “our Earth was created or fashioned by terrestrial spirits”? (S.D. II, 23)

*Answer:* H. P. Blavatsky herself gave the explanation as to the significance of the “spirits of this Earth” in this manner:

“Lha is the ancient word in transHimalayan regions for ‘Spirit,’ any celestial or *superhuman* Being, and it covers the whole series of heavenly hierarchies, from Archangel, or Dhyani, down to an angel of darkness, or terrestrial Spirit.” (S.D. II, 22; III, 35 6-vol. ed.; II, 25 3rd ed.)

The Tibetan word Lha is a generalizing term, just as is the familiar Sanskrit-Tibetan compound Dhyan-Chohan, signifying any celestial being superior in status to the human kingdom. The term “Planetary Spirits” was also used in presenting the first sloka of the second series of the Stanzas of Dzyan:

“The Lha which turns the fourth (*Globe, or our Earth*) is servant to the Lhas of the seven (*the planetary Spirits*) the Spirit-Guardian of our globe, which is the fourth in the chain, is subordinate to the chief Spirit (or God) of the Seven Planetary Genii or Spirits.” (*Ibid.*)

The words quoted by the questioner are part of an explanation added to a Commentary which reads:

“The seven higher make the Seven Lhas create the world,” states a Commentary; which means that our Earth, leaving aside the rest, was *created* or fashioned by terrestrial spirits, the ‘Regents’ being simply the supervisors. This is the first germ, the seed of that which grew later into the Tree of Astrology and Astrolatry.” (S.D. II, 23; III, 37 6-vol. ed.)

“*Planetary Spirits.* Primarily the rulers or governors of the planets. As our earth has its hierarchy of terrestrial planetary spirits, from the highest to the lowest planes, so has every other heavenly body. In Occultism, however, the term ‘Planetary Spirit’ is generally applied only to the seven highest hierarchies corresponding to the Christian archangels. These have all passed through a stage of evolution corresponding to the humanity of earth on other worlds, in long past cycles. Our earth, being as yet only in its fourth round, is far too young to have produced high planetary spirits.” (p. 255)

*Question.* Is the Manasaputra and the Ego one?

*Answer:* Some writers have used the terms synonymously, applying the Sanskrit compound Manasaputra to that portion of the human constitution which was quickened or awakened by the Sons of Mind (the Manasaputras) during the Third Root-Race. In this connotation the Manasaputra is made equivalent to the Reincarnating Ego—Buddhi-Manas. A distinction should of course be made between the Reincarnating Ego (the individuality) and the Personal Ego (the

personality-Kama-manas and the three lowest principles of the human constitution).

*Question.* Is there a Karma connected with beings higher than men?

*Answer.* Yes indeed. Every being, whether celestial or earthly, is “subject” to Karma. However, the Karma pertaining to the Dhyani-Chohans is not the same as the Karma applicable to humanity. The reference in the previous question to the role played by the Manasaputras in assisting the human race by awakening the mind-principle during the Third Root-Race is indicative of the action of Karma. Attention is directed to this passage in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*:

“Now there are-there *must* be ‘failures’ in the ethereal races of the many classes of Dhyani Chohans or Devas as well as among men. But still as these failures are too far progressed and spiritualized to be thrown back forcibly from their Dhyani Chohan-ship into the vortex of a new primordial evolution through the lower kingdoms-this then happens. When a new solar system is to be evolved these Dhyani Chohans are (remember the Hindu allegory of the *Fallen Devas* hurled by Siva into Andarah who are allowed by Parabrahm to consider it as an intermediate state where they may prepare themselves by a series of rebirths in that sphere for a higher state—a new regeneration) born in by the influx ‘ahead’ of the elementals and remain as a latent or inactive spiritual force in the aura of the nascent world of a new system until the stage of human evolution is reached. Then Karma has reached them and they will have to accept to the last drop in the bitter cup of retribution. Then they become an *active* Force, and commingle

with the Elementals, or progressed *entities* of the pure animal kingdom to develop little by little the full type of humanity. In this commingling they lose their high intelligence and spirituality of Devaship to regain them in the end of the seventh ring in the seventh round.” (p. 87; 3rd ed. p. 86)

With regard to the universality of Karma there is this passage in *The Secret Doctrine* on Karma or “the Law of Retribution.”

“This Law—whether Conscious or Unconscious—predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in Eternity, truly, for it *is* Eternity itself; and as such, since no act can be co-equal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it *is* action itself ... Karma is an Absolute and Eternal law in the World of manifestation; and as there can only be one Absolute, as One eternal ever present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as Atheists or materialists still less as fatalists; for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it is an aspect in its effects in the phenomenal world.

“Intimately, or rather indissolubly, connected with Karma, then, is the law of rebirth, or of the reincarnation of the same spiritual individuality in a long, almost interminable, series of personalities.” (II, 304-6; III, 306-7 6-vol. ed.; II, 319-20 3rd ed. )

*Question.* Is there a spiritual cord that connects the present personality with the immortal part that it incarnates in; and is the cord broken at death (so called)?

*Answer.* This question is best answered by referring to the Sutratman of Vedantic philosophy and to the silver cord of the Bible. The “spiritual cord” may well translate the term *sutratman*, which Sanskrit compound is

usually rendered “thread-soul”, inasmuch as *atman* is often translated “soul” although Atman represents the divine-spiritual aspect of the human constitution-the monadic essence. *The Secret Doctrine* refers to the Thread-soul in this manner:

“It is the Sutratman, the silver ‘thread’ which ‘incarnates’ from the beginning of Manvantara to the end, stringing upon itself the pearls of human existence, in other words, the spiritual aroma of every personality it follows through the pilgrimage of life.” (S.D. V, 427 6-vol. ed.; III, 446 3rd ed. )

Each earth-life is thus represented as a pearl on the silver thread, for the Sutratman is continuous both during life as well as existing during the after-death states.

In the Bible the breaking of the cord which binds the immortal triad, AtmaBuddhi-Manas, to the mortal components, is associated with the death of the physical body. The passage describing it is in *Ecclesiastes*:

“because man goeth to his long home; and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain.” (xii, 5-6).

Here is an interpretation: the “silver cord” represents the bond joining the higher to the lower principles; during sleep the silver cord is not loosed, because Higher Manas and Lower Manas have not been separated. The “golden bowl” may stand for the Higher Triad, Atma-Buddhi-Manas, which in a manner of speaking is broken off-actually withdrawn-from the lower quaternary. The “pitcher” is the physical body, Sthula-sarira, the carrier of

the union. It is represented as broken at the fountain when it no longer contains the water-the vital life-principle, Prana-from the Fountain of Life.

*Question.* How can we recognize the Higher Manas principle within ourselves, and how can we stimulate it?

*Answer.* One of the means of recognizing the Buddhi-Manas principle-the Higher Manas-is by hearkening to the voice’ of the conscience. For conscience is accumulated wisdom acquired through many lives on earth: the garnered expert• experience of numerous births, of past suffering trials, disappointments and achievements. All these are stored within the memory of the Reincarnating Ego. On the theme of activating the Higher Mind, H. P. Blavatsky wrote:

“By the enlightened application of our precepts to practice. By the use of higher reason, spiritual intuition, moral sense, and by following the dictates of what we call ‘the still small voice’ of our conscience, which is of our *Ego*.” (*The Key to Theosophy*’ p. 240)

And further, on the duty of a Theosophist to himself:

“To control and conquer, *through the Higher, the lower self*. To purify him inwardly and morally; to fear no one and nought, save the tribunal of his own conscience. Never to do a thing by halves i.e., if he thinks it the right thing to do let him do it openly and boldly, and wrong, never touch it at all.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 241)

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THE YOGA SUTRAS  
OF PATANJALI  
“Tine Book of the  *Spiritual Man*”  
An Interpretation by Charles Johnston

9. *One of the ascending degrees is the development of Control. First there is the overcoming of the mind-impress of excitation. Then comes the manifestation of the mind-impress of Control. Then the perceiving consciousness follows after the moment of Control. This is the development of Control.*

The meaning seems to be this: Some object enters the field of observation, and at first violently excites the mind, stirring up curiosity, fear, wonder; then the consciousness returns upon itself as it were, and takes the perception firmly in hand, steadying itself, and viewing the matter calmly from above. This steadying effort of the will upon the perceiving consciousness is Control, and immediately upon it follows perception, understanding, insight.

Take a trite example. Supposing one is walking in an Indian forest. A charging elephant suddenly appears. The man is excited by astonishment, and, perhaps, terror. But he exercises an effort of will, perceives the situation in its true bearings, and recognizes that a certain thing must be done; in this case, probably, that' he must get out of the way as quickly as possible.

Or a comet, unheralded, appears in the sky like a flaming sword, The beholder is at first astonished, perhaps terror-stricken;

but he takes himself in hand, controls his thoughts, views the apparition only, and finally calculates its orbit and its relation to meteor showers.

These are extreme illustrations; but with all knowledge the order of perception is the same: first, the excitation of the mind by the new object impressed on it; then the control of the mind from within; upon which follows the perception of the nature of the object. Where the eyes of the spiritual man are open, this will be a true and penetrating spiritual perception. In some such war do our living experiences come to us; first, with a shock of pain; then the Soul steadies itself and controls the pain; then the spirit perceives the lesson of the event, and its bearing upon the progressive revelation of life

10. *Through frequent repetition of this process, the mind becomes habituated to it, and there arises an equable flow of perceiving consciousness.*

Control of the mind by the Soul, like control of the muscles by the mind, comes by practice, and constant voluntary repetition.

As an example of control of the muscles by the mind, take the ceaseless practice by which a musician gains mastery over his instrument, or a fencer gains skill with a rapier. Innumerable small efforts of attention will make a result which seems

well-nigh miraculous; which, for the novice, is really miraculous. Then consider that far more wonderful instrument, the perceiving mind, played on by that fine musician, the Soul. Here again, innumerable small efforts of attention will accumulate into mastery, and a mastery worth winning. For a concrete example, take the gradual conquest of each day, the effort to live that day for the Soul. To him that is faithful unto death, the Master gives the crown of life.

11. *The gradual conquest of the mind's tendency to flit from one object to another, and the power of one-pointedness, make the development of Contemplation.*

As an illustration of the mind's tendency to flit from one object to another, take a small boy, learning arithmetic. He begins two ones are two; three ones are three and then he thinks of three coins in his pocket, which will purchase so much candy, in the store down the street, next to the toy-shop, where are base-balls, marbles and so on, and then he comes back with a jerk to, four ones are four. So with us also. We are seeking the meaning of our task but the mind takes advantage of a moment of slackened attention, and flits off from one frivolous detail to another, till we suddenly come back to consciousness after traversing leagues of space. 'We must learn to conquer this, and to go back within ourselves into the beam of perceiving consciousness itself, which is a beam of the

Oversoul. This is the true one-pointedness, the bringing of our consciousness to a focus in the Soul.

12. *When, following this, the controlled manifold tendency and the aroused one pointedness are equally balanced parts of the perceiving consciousness, this is the development of one-pointedness.*

This would seem to mean that the insight which is called one-pointedness -has two sides, equally balanced. There is, first, the manifold aspect of any object, the sum of all its characteristics and properties. This is to be held firmly in the mind. Then there is the perception of the object as a unity, as a whole, the perception of its essence. First, the details must be clearly perceived; then the essence must be comprehended. 'When the two processes are equally balanced, the true one-pointedness is attained. Everything has these two sides, the side of difference and the side of unity; there is the individual and there is the genus; the pole of matter and- diversity, and the pole of oneness and spirit. To see the object truly, we must see both.

13. *Through this, the inherent character, distinctive marks and conditions of being and powers, according to their development, are made clear.*

By the power defined in the preceding sutra, the inherent character, distinctive marks and conditions of beings and powers are made clear. For through this power, as defined, we get a twofold view

of each object, seeing at once all its individual characteristics and its essential character, species and genus; we see it in relation to itself and in relation to the Eternal. Thus we see a rose as that particular flower, of each petal; but we also see in it the species, the family to which it belongs, with its relation to all plants, to all life to Life itself. So in any day, we see events and circumstances; we also see in it the lesson set for the soul by the Eternal

14. *Every object has its characteristics which are already quiescent, those which are active, and those which are not yet definable.*

Every object has characteristics belonging to its past, its present and its future. In a fir tree, for example, there are the stumps or scars of dead branches, which once represented its foremost growth; there are the branches with their needles spread out to the air; there are the buds at the end of each branch and twig, which carry the still closely packed needles which are the promise of the future.— In like manner, the chrysalis has, as its past, the caterpillar; as its future; the butterfly. The man has, in his past, the animal; in his future, the angel. Both are visible even now in his face. So with all things, for all things change and grow.

15 *Difference in stage is the cause of difference in developments.*

This but amplifies what has just been

said. The first stage is the sapling, the caterpillar, the animal. The second stage is the growing tree, the chrysalis, the man. The third is the splendid pine, the butterfly, the angel. Difference of stage is the cause of difference of development. So it is among men, and among the races of men.

16. *Through perfectly concentrated Meditation on the three stages of development comes a knowledge of past and future.*

We have taken our illustrations from natural science because since every true discovery in natural science is a divination of a law in nature, attained through a flash of genius, such discoveries really represent acts of spiritual perception, acts of perception by the spiritual man, even though they are generally not so recognized.

So we may once more use the same illustration, perfect insight into the chrysalis, reveals the caterpillar that it has been, the butterfly that it is destined to be. He who knows the seed knows the seed-pod or ear it has come from, and the plant that is to come from it.

So in like manner he who really knows today, and the heart of today, knows its parent yesterday and its child tomorrow. Past, present and future are all in the Eternal. He who dwells in the Eternal knows all three.

17. *The sound and the object and the*

*thought called up by a word are confounded because they are all blurred together in the mind. By perfectly concentrated Meditation on the distinction between them-, there comes an understanding of the sounds uttered by all beings.*

It must be remembered that we are speaking of perception by the spiritual man.

Sound, like every force, is the expression of a power of the-Eternal. Infinite shades of this power are expressed in the infinitely varied tones of sound. He who, having entry to the consciousness of the Eternal knows the essence of this power, can divine the meanings of all sounds, from the voice of the insect to the music of the spheres.

In like manner, he who has attained to spiritual vision can perceive the mind images in the thoughts of others, with the shade of feeling which goes with them, thus reading their thoughts as easily as he hears their words. Every one has the germ of this power, since difference of tone will give wider differing meanings to the same words; meanings which are intuitively perceived by everyone.

18. *Then the mind-impressions become visible, there comes an understanding of previous births.*

This is simple enough if we grasp the truth of rebirth. The fine harvest of past

experiences is drawn into the spiritual nature forming, indeed, the basis of its development. When the consciousness has been raised to a point above these fine subjective impressions and can look down upon them from above, this will in itself be a remembering of past births.

19. *By perfectly concentrated Meditation on mind-images ages is gained the understanding of the thoughts of others.*

Here, for those who can profit by it, is the secret of thought-reading. Take the simplest case of intentional thought transference. It is the testimony of those who have done this that the perceiving mind must be stilled, before the mind-image projected by the other mind can be seen. With it comes a sense of the feeling and temper of the other mind and so on, in higher degrees.

20. *But since that on which the thought in the mind of another rests is not objective to the thought-reader's consciousness, he perceives the thought only, and not also that on which the thought rests.*

The meaning appears to be simple: One may be able to perceive the thought of some one at a distance; one cannot, by that means alone, also perceive the external surroundings of that person, which arouse these thoughts.

21. *By perfectly concentrated Medita-*

*tion on the form of the body, by arresting the body's perceptibility, and by inhibiting the eye's power of sight, there comes the power to make, the body invisible.*

There are many instances of the exercise of this power, by mesmerists, hypnotists and the like; and we may simply call it an instance of the power of suggestion. Shankara tells us that by this power the popular magicians of the East perform their wonders, working on the mind-images of others, while remaining invisible themselves. It is all a question of being able to see and control the mind-images.

*22. The works which fill out the life-span may be either immediately or gradually operative. By perfectly concentrated Meditation on these comes a knowledge of the time of the end, as also through signs.*

A garment which is wet, says the commentator, may be hung up to dry and so dry rapidly, or it may be rolled in a ball and dry slowly; so a fire may blaze or smoulder. Thus it is with Karma, the works that fill out the life-span. By an insight into the mental forms and forces which make up Karma, there comes a knowledge of the rapidity or slowness of their development, and of the time when the debt will be paid.

*23. By perfectly concentrated Meditation on sympathy, compassion and kindness, is gained the power of interior union with*

*others.*

Unity is the reality; separateness the illusion. The nearer we come to reality, the nearer we come to unity of heart. Sympathy, compassion, kindness are modes of this unity of heart, whereby we rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. These things are learned by desiring to learn them.

*24. By perfectly concentrated Meditation on power, even such power as that of the elephant is gained.*

This is a pretty image. Elephants possess not only force, but poise and fineness of control. They can lift a straw, a child, a tree with perfectly judged control and effort. So the simile is a good one. By detachment, by withdrawing into the soul's reservoir of power, we gain all these, force and fitness and poise; the ability to handle with equal mastery things small and great, concrete and abstract alike.

*25. By bending upon them the awakened inner light, there comes a knowledge of things subtle or concealed or obscure.*

As was said at the outset, each consciousness is related to all consciousness; and, through it, comes a consciousness of all things; whether subtle or concealed or obscure. An understanding of this great truth will come with practice. As

one of the wise has said, we have no conception of the power of Meditation.

26. *By perfectly concentrated Meditation on the sun comes a knowledge of the worlds.*

This has several meanings: First, by a knowledge of the constitution of the sun, astronomers can understand the kindred nature of the stars. And it is said that there is a finer astronomy, where the spiritual man is the astronomer. But the sun also means the Soul, and through knowledge of the Soul comes a knowledge of the realms of life.

27. *By perfectly concentrated Meditation on the moon comes a knowledge of the lunar mansions.*

Here again are different meanings. The moon is, first, the companion planet, which, each day, passes backward through one mansion of the stars. By watching the moon, the boundaries of the mansion are learned, with their succession in the great time-dial of the sky. But the moon also symbolizes the analytic mind, with its divided realms; and these, too, may be understood through perfectly concentrated Meditation.

28. *By perfectly concentrated Meditation on the fixed pole-star comes a knowledge of the motions of the stars.*

Addressing Duty, stern daughter of the

Voice of God, Wordsworth finely said: Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong, And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong-- thus suggesting a profound relation between the moral powers and the powers that rule the worlds. So in this Sutra the fixed pole-star is the eternal spirit about which all things move, as well as the star toward which points the axis of the earth. Deep mysteries attend both, and the veil of mystery is only to be raised by Meditation, by open-eyed vision of the awakened spiritual man.

29. *Perfectly concentrated Meditation on the centre of force in the lower trunk brings an understanding of the order of the bodily powers.*

We are coming to a vitally important part of the teaching of Yoga: namely, the spiritual man's attainment of full self-consciousness, the awakening of the spiritual man as a self-conscious individual, behind and above the natural man. In this awakening, and in the process of gestation which precedes it, there is a close relation with the powers of the natural man., which are in a certain sense, the projection, outward and downward, of the powers of the spiritual man. This is notably true of that creative power of the spiritual man which, when embodied in the natural man, becomes the power of generation.

Not only is this power the cause of the continuance of the bodily race of mankind,

but further, in the individual, it is the key to the dominance of the personal life. Rising, as it were, through the life-channels of the body, it flushes the personality with physical force and maintains and colours the illusion that the physical life is the dominant and all-important expression of life.

In due time, when the spiritual man has begun to take form, the creative force will be drawn off, and become operative in building the body of the spiritual man just as it has been operative in building physical bodies, through generation in the natural world.

Perfectly concentrated Meditation on the nature of this force means, first, that rising of the consciousness into the spiritual world, already described, which gives the one sure foothold for Meditation; and then, from that spiritual point of vantage, not only an insight into the creative force, in its spiritual and physical aspects but also a gradually attained control of this wonderful force which will mean its direction to the body of the spiritual man, and its gradual withdrawal from the body of the natural man, until the over-pressure, so general and such a fruitful source of misery in our day, is abated, and purity takes the place of passion.

This overpressure which is the cause of so many evils and so much of human shame, is an abnormal. not a natural,

condition. It is primarily due to spiritual blindness, to blindness regarding the spiritual man, and ignorance even of his existence; for by this blind ignorance are closed the channels, through which, were they open, the creative force could flow into the body of the spiritual man, there building up an immortal vesture.

There is no cure for blindness, with its consequent over-pressure and attendant misery and shame, but spiritual vision; spiritual aspiration, sacrifice, the new birth from above. There is no other way to lighten the burden, to lift the misery and shame from human life.

Therefore, let us follow after sacrifice and aspiration, let us seek the light. In this way only shall we gain that insight into the order of the bodily powers, and that mastery of them, which this Sutra implies.

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(To be Continued.)

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Address all communications to:

Richard Slusser

140 S. 33rd St, Boulder, CO U.S.A.

80305-3426

Phone (303) 494-5482

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