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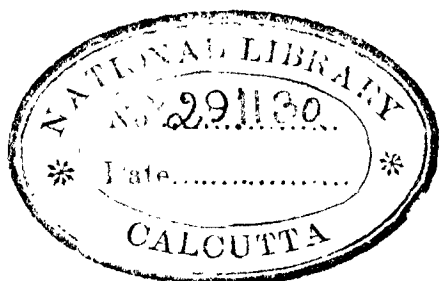
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LIFE AFTER DEATH

BY
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MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

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IS THE SOUL IMMORTAL ?¹

None has power to destroy the unchangeable.

—Bhagavad-Gita.

In the great Sanskrit epic, the Mahabharata, the story is told how the hero, Yudhishtira, when asked by Dharma to tell what was the most wonderful thing in the world, replied, that it was the persistent belief of mankind in their own deathlessness in spite of their witnessing death everywhere around them almost every moment of their lives. And, in fact, this is the most stupendous wonder in human life. In spite of all arguments to the contrary urged in different times by different schools, in spite of the inability of reason to penetrate the veil of mystery which will ever hang between the sensuous and the super-

¹ The Swamiji's contribution to the discussion of this question, carried on in the pages of *The New York Morning Advertiser*.

sensuous worlds, man is thoroughly persuaded that he cannot die.

We may study all our lives, and in the end fail to bring the problem of life and death to the plane of rational demonstration, affirmative or negative. We may talk or write, preach or teach, for or against the permanency or impermanency of human existence as much as we like ; we may become violent partisans of this side or that ; we may invent names by the hundred, each more intricate than its predecessor, and lull ourselves into a momentary rest under the delusion of our having solved the problem once for all ; we may cling with all our powers to any one of the curious religious superstitions, or the far more objectionable scientific superstitions—but in the end, we find ourselves playing an eternal game in the bowling alley of reason and raising intellectual pin after pin, only to be knocked over again and again.

But behind all this mental strain and torture, not infrequently productive of more dangerous results than mere games, stands a fact un-

challenged and unchallengeable—the fact, the wonder, which the Mahabharata points out as the inability of our mind to conceive our own annihilation. Even to imagine my own annihilation I shall have to stand by and look on as a witness.

Now, before trying to understand what this curious phenomenon means, we want to note that upon this one fact the whole world stands. The permanence of the external world is inevitably joined to the permanence of the internal, and, however plausible any theory of the universe may seem which asserts the permanence of the one and denies that of the other, the theorist himself will find that in his own mechanism not one conscious action is possible, without the permanence of both the internal and the external worlds being one of the factors in the motive cause. Although it is perfectly true that when the human mind transcends its own limitations, it finds the duality reduced to an indivisible unity ; on this side of the unconditioned, the whole objective world—that is to say, the world we know—is

and can be alone known to us as existing for the subject, and therefore, before we would be able to conceive the annihilation of the subject we are bound to conceive the annihilation of the object.

So far it is plain enough. But now comes the difficulty. I cannot think of myself ordinarily as anything else but a body. My idea of my own permanence includes my idea of myself as a body. But the body is obviously impermanent, as is the whole of nature—a constantly vanishing quantity.

Where, then, is this permanence ?

There is one more wonderful phenomenon connected with our lives, without which “who will be able to live, who will be able to enjoy life a moment ?”—the idea of freedom.

This is the idea that guides each footstep of ours, makes our movements possible, determines our relations to each other—nay, is the very warp and woof in the fabric of human life. Intellectual knowledge tries to drive it inch by inch from its territory, post after post is snatched away from its domains, and each step is made

fast and iron-bound with the railroadings of cause and effect. But it laughs at all our attempts, and, lo, it keeps itself above all this massive pile of law and causation with which we tried to smother it to death ! How can it be otherwise ? The limited always requires a higher generalisation of the unlimited to explain itself. The bound can only be explained by the free, the caused by the uncaused. But again, the same difficulty is also here. What is free ? The body, or even the mind ? It is apparent to all that they are as much bound by law as anything else in the universe.

Now the problem resolves itself into this dilemma : Either the whole universe is a mass of never-ceasing change and nothing more, irrevocably bound by the law of causation, not one particle having a unity of itself, yet is curiously producing an ineradicable delusion of permanence and freedom—or, there is in us and in the universe something which is permanent and free, showing that the basal constitutional belief of the human mind is not a delusion. It is the duty of science to explain

facts by bringing them to a higher generalisation. Any explanation, therefore, that first wants to destroy a part of the fact given to be explained, in order to fit itself to the remainder, is not scientific, whatever else it may be.

So, any explanation that wants to overlook the fact of this persistent and all-necessary idea of freedom, commits the above-mentioned mistake of denying a portion of the fact, in order to explain the rest, and is, therefore, wrong.

The only other alternative possible, then, is to acknowledge, in harmony with our nature, that there is something in us which is free and permanent.

But it is not the body ; neither is it the mind. The body is dying every minute. The mind is constantly changing. The body is a combination, and so is the mind ; and as such can never reach to a state beyond all change. But beyond this momentary sheathing of gross matter, beyond even the finer covering of the mind is the Atman, the true Self of man, the Permanent, the Ever-Free.

It is His freedom that is percolating through layers of thought and matter, and in spite of the colourings of name and form, is ever asserting its unshackled existence. It is His deathlessness, His bliss, His peace, His divinity, that shines out and makes itself felt in spite of the thickest layers of ignorance. He is the real Man, the fearless One, the deathless One, the Free.

Now, freedom is only possible when no external power can exert any influence, produce any change. Freedom is only possible to the being who is beyond all conditions, all laws, all bondages of cause and effect. In other words, the unchangeable alone can be free and, therefore, immortal.

This Being, this Atman, this real Self of man, the Free, the Unchangeable, is beyond all conditions, and as such, It has neither birth nor death.

“Without birth or death, eternal, ever-existing is this Soul of man.”

REINCARNATION¹

*"Both you and I have passed through many
births;
You know them not, I know them all."*

—Bhagavad-Gita.

Of the many riddles that have perplexed the intellect of man in all climes and times, the most intricate is himself. Of the myriad mysteries that have called forth his energies to struggle for solution, from the very dawn of history, the most mysterious is his own nature. It is at once the most insoluble enigma and the problem of all problems. As the starting-point and the repository of all we know and feel and do, there never has been, nor will be, a time when man's nature will cease to demand his best and foremost attention.

Though through hunger after that truth, which of all others has the most intimate con-

¹ Contributed to the *Metaphysical Magazine*, New York, March, 1895.

nection with his very existence ; though through an all-absorbing desire for an inward standard by which to measure the outward universe ; though through the absolute and inherent necessity of finding a fixed point in a universe of change, man has sometimes clutched at handfuls of dust for gold, and even when urged on by a voice higher than reason or intellect, he has many times failed rightly to interpret the real meaning of the divinity within—still, there never was a time since the search began, when some race, or some individuals, did not hold aloft the lamp of Truth.

Taking a one-sided, cursory and prejudiced view of the surroundings and the unessential details, sometimes disgusted also with the vagueness of many schools and sects, and often, alas, driven to the opposite extreme by the violent superstitions of organised priestcraft—men have not been wanting, especially among advanced intellects, in either ancient or modern times, who not only gave up the search in despair, but declared it fruitless and useless. Philosophers might fret and sneer, and priests ply

their trade even at the point of the sword ; but truth comes to those alone who worship at her shrine for her sake only, without fear and without shopkeeping.

Light comes to individuals through the conscious efforts of their intellect ; it comes slowly, though, to the whole race, through unconscious percolations. The philosophers show the volitional struggles of great minds : history reveals the silent process of permeation through which truth is absorbed by the masses.

Of all the theories that have been held by man about himself, that of a soul entity, separate from the body and immortal, has been the most widespread ; and among those that held the belief in such a soul, the majority of the thoughtful had always believed also in its pre-existence.

At present, the greater portion of the human race, having organised religion, believe in it ; and many of the best thinkers in the most favoured lands, though nurtured in religions avowedly hostile to every idea of the pre-existence of the soul, have endorsed it. Hindu-

ism and Buddhism have it for their foundation ; the educated classes among the ancient Egyptians believed in it ; the ancient Persians arrived at it ; the Greek philosophers made it the corner-stone of their philosophy ; the Pharisees among the Hebrews accepted it, and the Sufis among the Mohammedans almost universally acknowledged its truth.

There must be peculiar surroundings which generate and foster certain forms of belief among nations. It required ages for the ancient races to arrive at any idea about a part, even of the body, surviving after death ; it took ages more to come to any rational idea about this something which persists and lives apart from the body. It was only when the idea was reached of an entity whose connection with the body was only for a time, and only among those nations who arrived at such a conclusion, that the unavoidable question arose—Whither ? Whence ?

The ancient Hebrews never disturbed their equanimity by questioning themselves about the soul. With them death ended all. Karl

Heckel justly says : " Though it is true that in the Old Testament, preceding the exile, the Hebrews distinguish a life-principle, different from the body, which is sometimes called 'Nephesh,' or 'Ruakh,' or 'Neshama,' yet all these words correspond rather to the idea of breath, than to that of spirit or soul. Also in the writings of the 'Palestinean Jews, after the exile, there is never made mention of an individual immortal soul, but always only of a life-breath emanating from God, which, after the body is dissolved, is reabsorbed into the Divine 'Ruakh.' "

The ancient Egyptians and the Chaldeans had peculiar beliefs of their own about the soul, but their ideas about this living part after death must not be confused with those of the ancient Hindu, the Persian, the Greek, or any other Aryan race. There was from the earliest times, a broad distinction between the Aryas and the non-Sanskrit speaking Mlechchhas, in the conception of the soul. Externally it was typified by their disposal of the dead—the Mlechchhas mostly trying their best to *preserve* the dead

bodies, either by careful burial or by the more elaborate processes of mummifying, and the Aryas, generally burning their dead.

Herein lies the key to a great secret—the fact that no Mlechchha race, whether Egyptian, Assyrian, or Babylonian, ever attained to the idea of the soul as a separate entity which can live *independent* of the body, without the help of the Aryas, especially of the Hindus.

Although Herodotus states that the Egyptians were the first to conceive the idea of the immortality of the soul, and states as a doctrine of the Egyptians, “That the soul after the dissolution of the body enters again and again into a creature that comes to life ; then, that the soul wanders through all the animals of the land and the sea and through all the birds, and finally after three thousand years returns to a human body,” yet, modern researches into Egyptology have hitherto found no trace of metempsychosis in the popular Egyptian religion. On the other hand, the most recent researches of Maspero, A. Erman, and other eminent Egyptologists, tend to confirm the

supposition that the doctrine of palingenesis was not at home with the Egyptians.

With the ancient Egyptians the soul was only a double, having no individuality of its own, and never able to break its connection with the body. It persists only so long as the body lasts, and if by chance the corpse is destroyed, the departed soul must suffer a second death and annihilation. The soul after death was allowed to roam freely all over the world, but always returning to where the corpse was, at night, always miserable, always hungry and thirsty, always extremely desirous to enjoy life once more, and never being able to fulfil the desire. If any part of its old body was injured, the soul was also invariably injured in its corresponding part, and this idea explains the solicitude of the ancient Egyptians to preserve their dead. At first the deserts were chosen as the burial-place, because the dryness of the air did not allow the body to perish soon, thus granting to the departed soul a long lease of existence.

In course of time one of the gods discovered the process of making mummies, through

which the devout hoped to preserve the dead bodies of their ancestors for almost an infinite length of time, thus securing immortality to the departed ghost, however miserable it might be.

The perpetual regret for the world, in which the soul can take no further interest, never ceased to torture the deceased. "Oh, my brother," exclaims the departed, "withhold not thyself from drinking and eating, from drunkenness, from love, from all enjoyment, from following thy desire by night and by day ; put not sorrow within thy heart, for, what are the years of man upon earth ? The West is a land of sleep and of heavy shadows, a place wherein the inhabitants, when once installed, slumber on in their mummy forms, never more waking to see their brethren ; never more to recognise their fathers and mothers, with hearts forgetful of their wives and children. The living water, which earth giveth to all who dwell upon it, is for me stagnant and dead ; that water floweth to all who are on earth, while for me it is but liquid putrefaction, this water that is mine.

Since I came into this funeral valley I know not where nor what I am. Give me to drink of running water . . . , let me be placed by the edge of the water with my face to the North, that the breeze may caress me and my heart be refreshed from its sorrow."¹

Among the Chaldees also, although they did not speculate so much as the Egyptians as to the condition of the soul after death, the soul is still a double and is bound to its sepulchre. They also could not conceive of a state without this physical body, and expected a resurrection of the corpse again to life ; and though the goddess Ishtar, after great perils and adventures, procured the resurrection of her shepherd husband, Dumuzi, the son of Ea and Damkina, "The most pious votaries pleaded in vain from temple to temple, for the resurrection of their dead friends."

Thus we find, that the ancient Egyptians or

¹ This text has been translated into German by Brugsch, *Die Egyptische Graberwelt*, pp. 39, 40, and into French by Maspero, *Etudes Egyptiennes*, vol. I., pp. 181-190.

Chaldeans never could entirely dissociate the idea of the soul from the corpse of the departed, or the sepulchre. The state of earthly existence was best after all, and the departed are always longing to have a chance once more to renew it, and the living are fervently hoping to help them in prolonging the existence of the miserable double, and striving the best they can to help them.

This is not the soil out of which any higher knowledge of the soul could spring. In the first place it is grossly materialistic, and even then it is one of terror and agony. Frightened by the almost innumerable powers of evil, and with hopeless, agonised efforts to avoid them, the souls of the living, like their ideas of the souls of the departed—wander all over the world though they might—could never get beyond the sepulchre and the crumbling corpse.

We must turn now for the source of the higher ideas of the soul to another race—whose God was an all-merciful, all-pervading Being manifesting Himself through various bright, benign, and helpful Devas ; the first of all the

human race who addressed their God as Father—"Oh, take me by the hands even as a father takes his dear son"; with whom life was a hope and not a despair; whose religion was not the intermittent groans escaping from the lips of an agonised man during the intervals of a life of mad excitement; but whose ideas come to us redolent with the aroma of the field and forest; whose songs of praise—spontaneous, free, joyful, like the songs which burst forth from the throats of the birds when they hail this beautiful world illuminated by the first rays of the lord of the day—come down to us even now through the vista of eighty centuries, as fresh calls from heaven;—we turn to the ancient Aryas.

"Place me in that deathless, undecaying world, where is the light of heaven, and everlasting lustre shines"; "Make me immortal in that realm where dwells the King Vivasvan's son, where is the secret shrine of heaven"; "Make me immortal in that realm where they move even as they list"; "In the third sphere of inmost heaven, where worlds are full of light,

make me immortal in that realm of bliss."—These are the prayers of the Aryas in their oldest record, the Rig-Veda Samhita.

We find at once a whole world of difference between the Mlechchha and the Arya ideals. To the one, this body and this world are all that are real, and all that are desirable. A little life-fluid which flies off from the body at death, to feel torture and agony at the loss of the enjoyments of the senses can, they fondly hope, be brought back if the body is carefully preserved ; and thus a corpse became more an object of care than the living man. The other found out that that which left the body was the real man, and when separated from the body it enjoyed a state of bliss higher than it ever enjoyed when in the body. And they hastened to annihilate the corrupted corpse by burning it.

Here we find the germ out of which a true idea of the soul could come. Here it was—where the real man was not the body, but the soul ; where all ideas of an inseparable connection between the real man and the body

were utterly absent—that a noble idea of the freedom of the soul could rise. And it was when the Aryas penetrated even beyond the shining cloth of the body with which the departed soul was enveloped, and found its real nature of a formless, individual, unit principle, that the question inevitably arose, —Whence ?

It was in India and among the Aryas that the doctrine of the pre-existence, the immortality, and the individuality of the soul first arose. Recent researches in Egypt have failed to show any trace of the doctrines of an independent and individual soul existing before and after the earthly phase of existence. Some of the Mysteries were no doubt in possession of this idea, but in those it has been traced to India.

“I am convinced,” says Karl Heckel, “that the deeper we enter into the study of the Egyptian religion, the clearer it is shown that the doctrine of metempsychosis was entirely foreign to the popular Egyptian religion ; and that even that which single mysteries possessed of it was

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not inherent to the Osiris teachings, but derived from Hindu sources."

Later on, we find the Alexandrian Jews imbued with the doctrine of an individual soul, and the Pharisees of the time of Jesus, as already stated, not only had faith in an individual soul, but believed in its wanderings through various bodies ; and thus it is easy to find how Christ was recognised as the incarnation of an older Prophet, and Jesus himself directly asserted that John the Baptist was the Prophet Elias come back again. "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." —Matt. xi. 14.

The idea of a soul and of its individuality among the Hebrews, evidently came through the higher mystical teachings of the Egyptians, who in their turn derived it from India. And that it should come through Alexandria is significant, as the Buddhistic records clearly show Buddhistic missionary activity in Alexandria and Asia Minor.

Pythagoras is said to have been the first Greek who taught the doctrine of palingenesis among

the Hellenes. As an Aryan race, already burning their dead and believing in the doctrine of an individual soul, it was easy for the Greeks to accept the doctrine of reincarnation, through the Pythagorean teachings. According to Apuleius, Pythagoras had come to India, where he had been instructed by the Brahmins.

So far we have learned, that wherever the soul was held to be an individual, the real man, and not a vivifying part of the body only, the doctrine of its pre-existence had inevitably come, and that externally those nations that believed in the independent individuality of the soul had almost always signified it by burning the bodies of the departed ; though one of the ancient Aryan races, the Persian, developed, at an early period, and without any Semitic influence, a peculiar method of disposing of the bodies of the dead ; the very name by which they call their "Towers of silence," comes from the root *Daha*, to burn.

In short, the races who did not pay much attention to the analysis of their own nature, never went beyond the material body as their

all in all, and even when driven by higher light to penetrate beyond, they only came to the conclusion that somehow or other, at some distant period of time, this body will become incorruptible.

On the other hand, that race which spent the best part of its energies in the inquiry into the nature of man as a thinking being—the Indo Aryan—soon found out that beyond this body, beyond even the shining body which their forefathers longed after, is the real man, the principle, the individual who clothes himself with this body, and then throws it off when worn out. Was such a principle created? If creation means something coming out of nothing, their answer is a decisive "*No.*" This soul is without birth and without death; it is not a compound or combination but an independent individual, and as such it cannot be created or destroyed. It is only travelling through various states.

Naturally, the question arises, where was it all this time? The Hindu philosophers say, "It was passing through different bodies in

the physical sense, or, really and metaphysically speaking, passing through different mental planes."

Are there any proofs apart from the teachings of the Vedas upon which the doctrine of reincarnation has been founded by the Hindu philosophers? There are; and we hope to show later on, that there are grounds as valid for it as for any other universally accepted doctrine. But, first, we will see what some of the greatest of modern European thinkers have thought about reincarnation.

I. H. Fichte, speaking about the immortality of the soul, says :

"It is true there is one analogy in nature which might be brought forth in refutation of the continuance. It is the well-known argument that everything that has a beginning in time must also perish at some period of time ; hence, that the claimed past existence of the soul necessarily implies its pre-existence. This is a fair conclusion, but, instead of being an objection to, it is rather an additional argument for its continuance. Indeed, one needs only

to understand the full meaning of the metaphysico-physiological axiom, that in reality nothing can be created or annihilated, to recognise that the soul must have existed prior to its becoming visible in a physical body."

Schopenhauer, in his book, "*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*," speaking about palingenesis, says :

"What sleep is for the individual, death is for the 'will.' It would not endure to continue the same actions and sufferings throughout an eternity without true gain, if memory and individuality remained to it. It flings them off, and this is Lethe, and through this sleep of death it reappears fitted out with another intellect as a new being ; a new day tempts to new shores. These constant new births, then, constitute the succession of the life-dreams of a will which in itself is indestructible, until instructed and improved by so much and such various successive knowledge in a constantly new form, it abolishes and abrogates itself . . . It must not be neglected that even empirical grounds support a palingenesis of this kind.

As a matter of fact, there does exist a connection between the birth of the newly appearing beings and the death of those that are worn out. It shows itself in the great fruitfulness of the human race, which appears as a consequence of devastating diseases. When in the fourteenth century the Black Death had for the most part depopulated the Old World, a quite abnormal fruitfulness appeared among the human race, and twin-births were very frequent. The circumstance was also remarkable that none of the children born at this time obtained their full number of teeth ; thus nature, exerting itself to the utmost, was niggardly in details. This is related by F. Schnurrer, in his '*Chronik der Seuchen*,' 1825. Casper also, in his '*Ueber die Wahrscheinliche Lebensdauer des Menschen*,' 1835, confirms the principle that the number of births in a given population has the most decided influence upon the length of life and mortality in it, as this always keeps pace with mortality ; so that always and everywhere the deaths and the births increase and decrease in like proportion, which he places beyond

doubt by an accumulation of evidence collected from many lands and their various provinces. And yet it is impossible that there can be a physical causal connection between my early death and the fruitfulness of a marriage with which I have nothing to do, or conversely. Thus here the metaphysical appears undeniable, and in a stupendous manner, as the immediate ground of explanation of the physical. Every new-born being comes fresh and blithe into the new existence, and enjoys it as a free gift ; but there is and can be nothing freely given. Its fresh existence is paid for by the old age and death of a worn-out existence which has perished, but which contained the indestructible seed out of which the new existence has arisen ; they are one being."

The great English philosopher Hume, nihilistic though he was, says in the sceptical essay on immortality : "The metempsychosis is therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can listen to." The philosopher Lessing, with a deep poetical insight, asks : "Is this hypothesis so laughable merely because

it is the oldest ? because the human understanding, before the sophistries of the schools had dissipated and debilitated it, lighted upon it at once ? Why should not I come back as often as I am capable of acquiring fresh knowledge, fresh experience ? Do I bring away so much from once that there is nothing to repay the trouble of coming back ? ”

The arguments for and against the doctrine of a pre-existing soul reincarnating through many lives, have been many, and some of the greatest thinkers of all ages have taken up the gauntlet to defend it ; and so far as we can see, if there is an individual soul, that it existed before seems inevitable. If the soul is not an individual, but a combination of “Skandhas” (notions), as the “Madhyamikas” among the Buddhists insist, still they find pre-existence absolutely necessary to explain their position.

The argument showing the impossibility of an infinite existence beginning in time is unanswerable, though attempts have been made to ward it off by appealing to the omnipotence of God to do anything, however contrary to

reason it may be. We are sorry to find this most fallacious argument proceeding from some of the most thoughtful persons.

In the first place, God being the universal and common cause of all phenomena, the question was to find the natural causes of certain phenomena in the human soul, and the *Deus ex machina* theory is therefore quite irrelevant. It amounts to nothing less than confession of ignorance. We can give that answer to every question asked in every branch of human knowledge, and stop all inquiry and therefore knowledge, altogether.

Secondly, this constant appeal to the omnipotence of God is only a word-puzzle. The cause, as cause, is and can only be known to us as sufficient for the effect, and nothing more. As such we have no more idea of an infinite effect than of an omnipotent cause. Moreover, all our ideas of God are only limited ; even the idea of cause limits our idea of God. Thirdly, even taking the position for granted we are not bound to allow any such absurd theories as "Something coming out of nothing," or

"Infinity beginning in time," so long as we can give a better explanation.

A so-called great argument is made against the idea of pre-existence, by asserting that the majority of mankind are not conscious of it. To prove the validity of this argument, the party who offers it must prove that the whole of the soul of man is bound up in the faculty of memory. If memory be the test of existence, then all that part of our lives which is not now in it must be non-existent, and every person, who in a state of coma, or otherwise, loses his memory must be non-existent also.

The premises from which the inference is drawn of a previous existence, and that, too, on the plane of conscious action, as adduced by the Hindu philosophers, are chiefly these :

First, how else to explain this world of inequalities ? Here is one child born in the providence of a Just and Merciful God, with every circumstance conducing to his becoming a good and useful member of the human race, and perhaps at the same instant and in the same city another child is born, under circum-

stances every one of which is against his becoming good. We see children born to suffer, perhaps all their lives, and that owing to no fault of theirs. Why should it be so? What is the cause? Of whose ignorance is it the result? If not the child's, why should it suffer, for its parents' actions?

It is much better to confess ignorance than to try to evade the question by the allurements of future enjoyments in proportion to the evil here, or by posing "mysteries." Not only undeserved suffering forced upon us by any agent is immoral—not to say unjust—but even the future-making-up theory has no legs to stand upon.

How many of the miserably born, struggle towards a higher life, and how many more succumb to the circumstances they are placed under? Should those who grow worse and more wicked by being forced to be born under evil circumstances, be rewarded for the wickedness of their lives in the future? In that case, the more wicked the man is here, the better will be his deserts hereafter.

There is no other way to vindicate the glory and the liberty of the human soul and reconcile the inequalities and the horrors of this world, than by placing the whole burden upon the legitimate cause—our own independent actions, or Karma. Not only so, but every theory of the creation of the soul from nothing, inevitably leads to fatalism and preordination, and, instead of a Merciful Father, places before us a hideous, cruel, and an ever-angry God to worship. And so far as the power of religion for good or evil is concerned, this theory of a created soul, leading to its corollaries of fatalism and predestination, is responsible for the horrible idea prevailing among Christians and Mohammedans—that the heathens are the lawful victims of their swords—and all the horrors that have followed and are following it still.

But an argument which the philosophers of the Nyaya school have always advanced in favour of reincarnation, and which to us seems conclusive, is this : Our experiences cannot be annihilated. Our actions (Karma) though apparently disappearing, remain still unperceiv-

ed (Adrishtam), and reappear again in their effect as tendencies (Pravrittis). Even little babies come with certain tendencies—fear of death, for example.

Now, if a tendency is the result of repeated actions, the tendencies with which we are born must be explained on that ground too. Evidently we could not have got them in this life, therefore we must have to seek for their genesis in the past. Now, it is also evident that some of our tendencies are the effects of the self-conscious efforts peculiar to man ; and if it is true that we are born with such tendencies, it rigorously follows that their causes were conscious efforts in the past—that is, we must have been on the same mental plane which we call the human plane, before this present life.

So far as explaining the tendencies of the present life by past conscious efforts goes, the reincarnationists of India and the latest school of evolutionists are at one ; the only difference is that the Hindus, as spiritualists, explain it by the conscious efforts of individual souls, and the materialistic school of evolutionists, by an

hereditary physical transmission. The schools which hold to the theory of creation out of nothing, are entirely out of court.

The issue has to be fought out between the reincarnationists—who hold that all experiences are stored up as tendencies in the subject of those experiences, the individual soul, and are transmitted by reincarnation of that unbroken individuality—and the materialists, who hold that the brain is the subject of all actions and the theory of the transmission through cells.

It is thus that the doctrine of reincarnation assumes an infinite importance to our mind, for the fight between reincarnation and mere cellular transmission is, in reality, the fight between spiritualism and materialism. If cellular transmission is the all-sufficient explanation, materialism is inevitable, and there is no necessity for the theory of a soul. If it is not a sufficient explanation, the theory of an individual soul bringing into this life the experiences of the past is as absolutely true. There is no escape from the alternative, reincarnation or materialism. Which shall we accept ?