

Introduction to “The Sleeping Spheres”

“The Sleeping Spheres” is a long-lost article on the post mortem states of the human Ego, written by *Jasper Niemand*, the pen name of Mrs. Archibald Keightley, known in the ranks of the Theosophical Society in America as Mrs. Julia Campbell VerPlanck. Being a close friend and co-worker of William Q. Judge, she was also the source of much of the material in *Letters That Have Helped Me*.

Julia’s article was published serially in *The Canadian Theosophist* in the March to July 1953 issues, and with minor changes reprinted in the August 1982 edition.

“The Sleeping Spheres” reports the author’s observations upon becoming apparently able to see into, and to some extent experience first-hand, the post-mortem state of Devachan. In Part I, she relates her view of “Sleeping Monads,” as seen from the outside, as it were. Part II is the narrative of her consciousness as she *became* the State of Devachan and re-lived her “past life review,” from the “inside” during a near-death experience.

The article is presented in its entirety with Part I and Part II immediately following each other to preserve the consistency of the narrative. The notes by Mr. Roos following the two parts have been numbered sequentially from 1 to 40 and the reference numbers have been added in the text to which the notes refer.

Introduction by the Editor of *The Canadian Theosophist*, Dudley W. Barr

Through the efforts of Mr. Willem B. Roos of Mexico City, Mexico, we are able to present a long-lost article on the post mortem states of the human Ego, written by 'Jasper Niemand', a close friend of and an active co-worker with Mr. William Q. Judge. There will also be published Mr. Roos’s commentaries on the text and a biographical note on ‘Jasper Niemand’ which were included in a pamphlet prepared by Mr. Roos.

In the Preface Mr. Roos states:

“In *The Path* for July 1893 appeared under the signature of Jasper Niemand Part 1 of ‘The Sleeping Spheres’. At the end of that article is printed ‘(To be continued)’ indicating that the author intended to publish a second part under the same title. From the contents of the last paragraph of Part 1 it is also clear that this second part would deal with a subjective devachanic experience of its author. But in the magazine *The Path* there was never published the continuation of ‘The Sleeping Spheres’. The final number of *The Path* is dated March 1896, after which the name was changed into *Theosophy*. This coincided with the death of its editor and founder, William Q. Judge. Up till now I have not been able to find out when and where the second part was published, yet it must have been published inasmuch as many years ago I obtained from Germany a German translation of

‘The Sleeping Spheres’ in pamphlet form, containing both Part I and II. This pamphlet is entitled *Schlafende Sphären oder Das Leben der Seele nach dem Tode, von Jasper Niemand*. The publisher is given as Paul Raatz, Theosoph. Verlag, Friedrichstrasse 16. No city is indicated, nor is the name of the translator given. What is worse, all reference to the source is omitted, and it is not even stated that the article is a translation from the English. . .”

Mr. Roos goes on to state that having finally given up all hope of finding the original English text of Part II, he decided to retranslate the German version. He had loaned his copy of the German text to a Dutch lady from whom he later obtained a photographic copy. “Only the importance of this article in the study of Theosophy, on the subject of which there does not exist anything comparable to it, could induce me to undertake this task, a task wholly foreign to my usual activities.”

Mr. Roos’s retranslation of Part II, together with the original English version of Part I and commentaries on both Parts, were published by Mr. Roos in a pamphlet which was presented by him at the 22nd Anniversary of the Cosmopolitan Group of Students of Theosophy in Mexico City on February 15, 1951.

Mr. Roos was in Toronto later in 1951 and told us the interesting story of his search for the missing Part II and of his translation of the German text. A copy of his pamphlet was left with us to be published later in the Magazine.

And now comes a curious sequel—a bound volume of the magazine in which the original of Part II was published, came to the Editor in 1952. This magazine was *The English Theosophist*, Vol. III, 1899-1900. This volume was among the books of the late Mrs. J. K. Bailey who for many years was Treasurer and Travelling Librarian for the Toronto Lodge. After her death in February, 1952, her books were given to the Toronto Lodge. This bound volume was given to the Editor as it seemed to be of historical interest and was not required for the Circulating Library. Glancing over the index we found “The Sleeping Spheres”, including the long-lost Part II. A typed copy was sent to Mr. Roos and later the bound volume itself was sent on from which Mr. Roos had photostatic copies made.

In making his retranslation Mr. Roos did not attempt a literal translation from the German text, but endeavoured to reproduce the style and spirit of the original article, in which task he was aided by having the original English text of Part I. That he was eminently successful in doing this is indicated by a comparison between the original of Part II and his retranslation.

We have often thought of the manner in which many threads of action came together in this little incident. If Mr. Roos had not visited Toronto in 1951 and aroused our interest in the article; if Mrs. Bailey had disposed of her books before her death or had given this particular volume to an interested friend; if her collection of books had not come to Toronto Lodge; if the volume of *The English Theosophist* had been put among the five thousand other books in the Lodge Library, the missing Part II might not have come to

light for many years. Possibly if we could view such an incident from the inner realms, we would see that such things do not occur by chance and that there is a pattern binding all together.

I. ON THE AUTHOR, JN.

Jasper Niemand is the *nom-de-plume* of Mrs. Archibald Keightley, also known in the ranks of the Theosophical Society in America under the name of Mrs. Julia Campbell VerPlanck. From “Faces of Friends,” and article in *The Path*, Vol IX, of April 1894, I quote the following:

“Her maiden name in full was Julia Wharton Lewis Campbell, daughter of the Hon. James H. Campbell, a prominent Pennsylvania lawyer... Her mother was Juliet Lewis, daughter of Chief Justice Ellis Lewis of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, a writer of verse possessing great poetical charm and value.”

“Miss Julia... married in 1871 Mr. Philip W. VerPlanck of New York; and six years later, in the course of a single year, she lost her husband and both sons suddenly by a most dramatic series of reverses...”

One day she heard Mr. Arthur Gebhard speak on Theosophy and the impression made “was so deep that she joined the T.S. within two weeks, and thenceforward began her unceasing work for Theosophy.”

“Living with her parents at a distance from New York she wrote for *The Path* under the names of ‘Julius,’ ‘August Waldensee,’ ‘J,’ and later on as ‘Jasper Niemand,’ as well as unsigned articles, and also corresponded with T.S. enquirers.”

“Mrs. VerPlanck continued to live with her parents in Pennsylvania until the autumn of 1891, when she married Dr. Archibald Keightley of Old Hall, Westmoreland, England.

Her first contribution to *The Path*, called “The Singing Silences,” appeared in August 1886, and is signed “Julius.” She was then an F.T.S. for only a few months, as she first knew about Theosophy through the S.P.R. report and the latter was published on December 31st, 1885. For more details see *Lucifer* VIII:382, though there is a printer’s error in the first line, as the year must have been 1886 instead of 1885. In this *Lucifer* article she writes about H.P.B.: “I never met her...” This statement and that referring to the S.P.R. pamphlet induces me to identify Jasper Niemand with R.S., the author of a letter to Countess Wachtmeister and which was reproduced on page 121 of *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine* by the Countess Constance Wachtmeister. R.S. also writes: “Living some thousands of miles from England, I never met Madame Blavatsky in person. It is now seven years since first I heard her name and the word ‘Theosophy’... by coming across the S.P.R. pamphlet...” (p. 121). And again: “...Thus I was enabled to prove that I really hear her (H.P.B.’s) wish overseas...” (p. 124) showing

that R.S. lived in the U.S.A. Other internal evidences are supplied by R.S.'s letter, leaving no doubt of the latter's identity with Jasper Niemand. From this letter it appears that she was taught astrally by H.P.B., visiting the latter during sleep in her home in England, and that she soon learned to use her astral senses at will: "After a short time, I was able to see and to hear at will, without training or effort, as simply and as easily as one breathes. I could see a distant place or person or hear a reply to a question at will... But... I never did any of these things for idle curiosity, but only for the work of Theosophy..." (p. 125).

About her articles Mrs. Keightley writes: "When I began to write articles along these lines, H.P.B. sent me a pen which I always used. The articles were and are always written in full objective consciousness, but at these times there is a feeling of inspiration, of greater mental freedom. The *Letters That Have Helped Me* were received at my Pennsylvania home. They were written for me and for Dr. Keightley—and for the use of others later on—by Mr. W.Q. Judge, at the express wish of H.P. Blavatsky..." (*The Path* IX:15-16). The above-mentioned letters to JN started in 1886, as stated by her and her husband in a letter to the Editor of *The Irish Theosophist* dated Jan. 13th, 1895 (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, 1946 edition, p. 271).

The above will suffice to give the reader of "The Sleeping Spheres" some idea of its author.—Willem B. Roos.

The Sleeping Spheres

Jasper Niemand

Part I

One came to me, calling me out of the form in which I dwell, and showed me the sleeping spheres.

Now the object of this Messenger [1] who had come to me was to make clear to me some of the hidden things: things hidden, I mean, from the eye of flesh, yet not lying so remote from our ken if we only make some *mental effort* toward seeing. And the further idea appeared to be that if I were to see them, as it were, objectively, though with the astral organ of sight, I might be able to make this, the Devachanic State, clearer to the thought of some of my fellows. For the sleeping Spheres are Devachanic entities. In Devachan [2] we are not yet united with the UNKNOWN SOURCE. Hence the need, on the part of the Ego, of form—or container—of some kind. I have chosen here, arbitrarily perhaps, the name of "Sphere" for this Devachanic form.

These Spheres, than which there are none more beautiful, do not lie in any given place; they are self-contained; they have condition, but no place [3]. When I asked my companion how this could really be so, he pointed out to me that they interpenetrated many other states of matter, cohering by means of their own vibration [4], just as do all other forms, of whatever kind and however ethereal, throughout the whole of nature.

I had passed from my body into the air [5] and the airy form, and from thence into the ether. All about me lay the sleeping Spheres, delicate milky films on the golden ocean of light. Ever and anon a thrill of faintest colour trembled across their deeps, and I trembled too, for it was given to me to know that these colour-motions were, in reality, Thoughts of profound delight. Yes, these palpitating Spheres had pure joy in their own opalescent motions; joy as they throbbed in the living ether, and a joy which had great meaning. This was plain to even my understanding, which at the moment was that of the airy body [6] only. (I presuppose my readers to know even better than myself, that the consciousness of one body differs greatly from that of another. This is true whether the different bodies are all contained together in their own outer shell, or are at the time separate from that temporary covering.)

Imagine, then, that I saw these radiant shapes, now silvery, with a bluish frost upon them, now blooming into tints so translucent that the eye of the soul alone could perceive them, and that every tint was a Thought, an experience. These fair Thoughts were the dreams of the souls disengaged from earth. Dreaming thus, the Spheres slept. How blissful the dreams! For those colours were both living Light and Intelligence; each colour was Thought; Thought of the most exalted order known to the human Mind. Thought quivered through the Spheres, changing their Consciousness; fusing them anew [7]; quickening their higher Life; illumining their purer Light, in a world-plane whereon Light, Life, and Thought are one magnificent act of Being, and not the trivial things known to most men in this everyday world. Each Sphere thus became more and more incandescent with this three-fold LIFE, and I saw them blooming and growing, through this sweet iris-hued ebb and flow, as a flower unfolds towards greater perfection by means of assimilated sunlight. The unfoldment was divine, the peace profound. Silence, like a brooding mother, covered them over; it was only enhanced by an occasional soft semitone, the harmonious breathing of the sleeping Spheres.

Would that I need say no more!

Yet even while I watched their gracious Being, it became plain that, like flowers, they must fade. Although they were composed of atoms of living Light, Light that was itself a grand Consciousness, yet I soon observed a marked change [8] to take place and to become prevalent in all of them. This change was at first exceedingly beautiful, and consisted of a slight rhythmic motion in the atoms of a Sphere. The atoms danced; living opals shot through with tenderest Light. Seeing this, I could but ask myself, "What new Thoughts are in the dreams of the Spheres?" This motion was soon imparted to the Spheres themselves. They trembled into coruscations of Light and grandly awoke [9]. From them, thus swaying, issued glories that no tongue may name, nor do words contain them. Each

Sphere thus joining the choral dance emitted a choral song; music whose ordained instrument is the naked soul; music that is visible flames of sweetest, intensest desire. All my being awoke into delicious longings in which reverence had no place. I said to my Companion: “What is the burden of this bewitching song?” Very gravely he replied: “It sings of the Life of the world.” I wondered to hear him speak so solemnly of what gave me so great delight, but when I turned again to the Spheres, I felt a new perplexity. The accelerated motion had produced colours more vivid, more of the gross and solid nature of earthy pigment; the music now shrilled across the etheric spaces; there was in it the strident note of crass emerald, the bugle blare of blazing crimson. The Spheres would sleep no more. Yet I saddened now at their brilliant awakening; in my inner heart a deep voice said: “This is the end of all desire.” [10]

The music augmented in volume; the aerial dance became a mad whirl to madder—yet harmonic—sound. This sound marshalled the turbulent atoms at the spheric centers, where they set up tentative efforts towards crystallization—form [11]. These efforts impeded the spheric motion. Laboured, troubled movements, indicative of troubled Consciousness, set in. The fair Thought of the Spheres was disturbed. Streams of red fire, strange contractive motions, throes whose every convulsion made the Spheres less ethereal, sound whose every note made the atoms more gross, until suddenly the formative nucleus at the centre shuddered forth into form—a form which caught only a dim reflection of the original Light, a form which could not exist at all on the original plane of the Spheres. Must the awakened Spheres hereafter bear that grotesque burden? Suspended there, fringed only with the gracious spheric hues, gross cause of the dispersal of beauteous Being, still I recognized it, still I wept [12] as I said: “Comes the earth-child thus forth? Surely this is Death that I have witnessed, and not Life.”

My Companion answered: “That is in truth what thou hast witnessed. A death to Devachanic existence, a birth into the material Life which thou and thy blinded fellows call ‘the world’. The form whose birth thou hast seen is but the model of the earthly one which it informs. It is thy lot to know more of this matter of so-called Life and Death. Another time I will again meet thee; thou shalt then undergo some experience of Devachanic Life.” He disappeared, leaving me in my ethereal body adrift upon the night.

Part II

The Messenger had told me that, having thus seen the Devachanic life from outside, as it were, I should also go through the experience. His words had speedy fulfillment.

Before recounting what befell me thereafter, two points must be made clear.

1. The experience I passed through next was *my own experience*; it was not that of any other as to its details. For the act of dissolution, or separation, called “death”, varies in details with individuals. So do the *post-mortem* experiences. All die, all pass through Kāma-loka (or the place of desires), all have some Devachanic experience, even though

mere materialistic minds sleep it dreamlessly away. But the details of experience are different with each human soul (Manas) that casts off a body. There are as many kinds of death, I may say, as there are souls, and not one unvarying experience for all. And why? Because it is not “death” at all, in fact. If we lived but one mortal life and then died, according to ordinary belief, the act of death might be the same for all. But as the human soul chooses now objective life and now life subjective, making now its own heaven-world, choosing now its own earth-place and experience, we can see that, though all pass the portals called Life and Death, the methods and details must differ with each. At a later period, I came to a knowledge of other and different forms of death and after-death experiences, each typical of a given type of individual, or, to put it more correctly, of soul.

2. The second point is this. My own and first experience, which I am about to recount to you, was, to me, *perfectly real*. I did not, *at the time*, compare it with the previous sight of the sleeping Spheres, nor with anything else. I was plunged in the experience itself. I did not call it “death.” I did not know it as “death”. I lived it. I was that experience itself. I knew it only as a fullness of life hitherto unguessed at, one hitherto absent even from my highest imaginings, my most vivid dream.

Yet remember this. I lost sight of non-essentials only. Never did I forget for an instant the essential fact of the Ego, the fact of identity; I had full knowledge that the subject of this experience was “I myself”. This seems a clumsy way of saying that my consciousness, though purified and uplifted, broadened also, still identified the Perceiver as “I”. To put it after another fashion: I knew perfectly well all the time that it was “I myself” undergoing this new and beautiful life. My consciousness, while it perceived the identity of Being, the identity of souls, never passed into the All-Consciousness which is all-in-all and knows no separateness.

This fact alone shows that Devachan is not the highest state. It is the subjective existence of the personal and higher Ego [13]. It is *not* the impersonal, non-separate condition of that Divine and Higher Self which is a state of the Divine Ego, and not a body or form. This Higher Self is a state of the Sphere [14], and may occur during the lifetime of the physical body, being entered at will by the white Adept who, by exercise of the purified and universal volition, or will-energy, can enter all and any state of consciousness at will. But Devachanic existence is quite other than this highest state.

After I had passed back to the ordinary consciousness, then, and then only, was I able to compare the two events [15] illustrated by the two parts of this article. Part I is the Seeing. Part II is the Being. Having had both experiences, I was able to complete one by the other, and to observe what point of seeing corresponded to the other point of being. For example, I saw what a change of colour, such as I had seen, meant in the life of Thought through which I passed.

It is a difficult experience to make clear to you, and my best plan will be to tell you first all that I went through, and afterwards to compare the two experiences of exterior observation, or sight, and interior observation, or being. In this way you will travel along

the path taken by myself. If I were to stop at different points of my narrative for purposes of comparison, all the unity of experience will be lost and you will be confused.

Let me premise, therefore, that when this second experience came to me, the friends about me thought that I had in truth died. There were no signs of life, visible to the trained, medical observation. Rigour of the body set in and continued for hours. All the death signs were apparent. Hence those who loved me went through the experience in another form, the most harrowing form, for they thought the soul beloved by them had again passed from mortal sight upon the wings of the air, that it might be rejoined, but would not return. So they mourned for me, plunged in anguish while “I myself” was with them in a fullness of life yet unknown. Take comfort, oh you mourners! You alone suffer in your blindness. For the so-called dead there is only exceeding great joy from which no beloved soul is absent, to which no sense of loss is possible.

When this experience first befell me, I was lying upon my bed, whither I had been conveyed by reason of sudden heart failure. Great pain, throbs and nervous shocks vibrating deeply through my whole being, had caused me to close my eyes. A voice, well-known and well-beloved, seemed to speak to me from afar, and to pierce through a thick fog in my brain, a fog like an enveloping, down-pressing mist, with which the brain-matter struggled, striving to go through the motions of thinking, motions impeded by that increasing semi-material weight. I could not reply, but the voice spoke again, with an accent so imploring, so urgent, that I made a mighty effort, as it seemed to me.

Lift my heavy swollen tongue I could not; sound would not well up into the throat; not a muscle anywhere would respond to my will. Yet once again that voice besought me, and so great was the anguish it conveyed, that I could not endure the thought of such misery on the part of one I loved. Once again, I made a desperate effort; I seemed to myself to writhe convulsively, to struggle with all my body, though I am told that no motion on my part was visible to the bystander; and then, at last, I succeeded in opening my eyes, to see dark earnest eyes, soul-lighted, gazing eagerly into mine. And, then I saw no more. A deep breath passed through me and left me, and I fell into Thought [16]. At this moment I appeared to the bystander to draw my last breath and to “die”.

It was not the same so far as I was concerned. That look from eyes I knew so well started a deep train of Thought, in which I was soon steeped, immersed. This train began with thinking of the loved comrade’s pain. Then I longed to soothe that pain. Upon this wish followed the thought that our philosophy, which we had tried to live, and which had been as a guide to our steps, must soon step in and forbid all grieving, all sorrow. Then, naturally, I thought of the times when these spiritual teachings had already supported us; on these, followed remembrances of the time when I had not as yet heard of these teachings. This thought seemed to act like a sudden spring which, when touched, releases a concealed door; the whole of my life sprang out and filed before me in review, through that opened door of the brain.

Days of childhood, careless, unconscious, full of nature pleasures, joy in life and motion and the companionship of all the creatures; the human creatures like myself, and the dear animals who understood the child-life so well, it seemed; the underworld little people seen by childhood's eyes only. Slowly the opening mind grasped more and more of the fullness of Nature, the panorama of the skies swept in, the stately march of sound and colour began. Rich delights held revel in the opening consciousness, only to be chilled by the cold dawn of self-consciousness.

The child began to feel itself apart from Nature, apart also from fellow beings who spoke what it could not ratify. Misunderstood, miscalled, misapplied, was its little life. All that's children thought was foolish; Life was other than it appeared to the innocent heart of childhood. Most of what was seen by a child's clear seeing did not exist, was not so understood, nor was it seen by the wise elder people; it was only the folly of naughty children, and, if persisted in, was punishable as a lie. The child must conform to accepted ideas, or suffer punishment. Thus, children suffer with the pioneers of Truth.

The young heart and mind were docile; they strove to believe as they were bidden; they succeeded in a measure—and what then? What then? This, to wit—that the mind, developing further, observed that grown people did not act what they believed—or said they believed. It seemed as if to think was one thing, *to do* was quite another thing.

A grim puzzle came before the child-heart. It said, in its puzzle, in its dim recesses: “What shall I do? Shall I think true, or shall I *act* true?” And again: “If I say what I think and do it, I am naughty. But if I do what I am told and say what they teach me, I am good, and I want—oh! how I want to be good. But I don't understand it, and it isn't true to me. And if I even do what they tell me, I must think, and then I am naughty again.” So a passionate sense of wrong sprang up in the child's heart, a wrong it could not define or name; just a cry far down in its nature for justice and for light.

But Nature wearies. A child cannot cope with the surging tides about it: To yield is easier for the plastic unmoulded nature; persistence of struggle is not for the child. So, I say, it yields, or, rather, it sinks back exhausted, and then comes the fatal time; the time when the still developing sense-mind perceives the life of sense and pleasure, when these are tasted, understood, enjoyed. And then the lesson of thinking what one does not act upon, of believing things which have nothing to do with our lives—the hateful lesson of not caring about the divorce of Thought and Life, but only for one's mere personal honour, only to speak the truth about objective events, to care for true speech more than for a true life, a true soul—this parrot lesson was learned, well learned, because it made life easy, it stifled care.

The child became indifferent to living a lie; indifferent to saying prayers it did not understand to a God it could not comprehend and ceased to care for, as a child will cease to care for anything which is not vital, not necessary to its inner nature, and contrary to its ideas of justice—that justice for which children care so much and to which we may nearly always appeal. The eyes of the mind widened; they took in pain, cruelty, wrong; they

found that no one cared much, that most people put these things out of mind; that they were done by an all-wise, all-merciful, loving God, as punishment.

But not all were punished. The child came to know of sins rewarded by the world and passed over by that God. It felt. It could not reason. It rebelled. Rebelled at its teachers; rebelled at the books; rebelled at injustice; clamoured to be understood; cried out to understand. Love was all about it, but love could not soothe it. It wanted to know. The key to the riddle was missing. It was told it thought too much; told to go and play. And, child-like, it played, revolving its riddle. Child-like, it kept silence, for a child learns, soonest of all lessons, that silence is the great refuge from scorn, from mockery, from rebuke. Thus, the first teaching of hypocrisy comes to the child, and it learns pretence as the only right of sanctuary left to man.

Still it wondered, still it dreamed. And then, all at once, in a day or a night a change swept over; material existence paraded its brilliant colours, its seductive sweets; the child rushed into the vortex of existence, it forgot, in pleasure, the need to understand. Life arose before it, alluring, exciting, full of strange things. Oh yes! there were death and joy and passion and new scenes and loves and hates, and all the delicate things of sense in sound, colour, taste. In Thought, too, was pleasure, Thought of Art and Poetry, and love of dreams, and ideal hopes, all blended in one swift, ever-changing phantasmagoria. Sorrows came, and were half sweet after too much rejoicing. Gladness came and rescued from grief. All was new and interesting, all, except here and there a moment, an eye-wink, a breath, as it were, a something that blew cold and chill and seemed to wither everything, a moment in which nothing seemed worthwhile, because nothing lasted.

And then came a new pang when the child, grown much older, discovered in itself a horror at the idea that these things *should last*. It had wearied of all, turning from one to the other. How dreadful the idea that any should last long, and longer still!

So Life surged by in a swift, flashing Thought. Distinct scenes too, of danger, of illness, of loss. There were those awful moments when the heart sees the beloved ones dying, and cannot follow them into the unseen with any certain hope. Those other moments too, equally terrible, when the unworthiness and falseness of things or persons trusted and beloved is discovered. The death of bright ideals befell. And over all, under all, the grim traits of unreality, the sense of the falsity of the whole of Life. The soul sought then some God, "for any God to hear the cry". For something *real* to rest upon. In vain, the world it knew was given over to change and unbelief; there was nothing to live and to die by. Slowly one rung after another of Life's ladder was passed, and hunger for something real grew greater, fiercer, more burning, more intolerable, more maddening, until...

Ah! the dawn of the beautiful hour when the soul found *itself*. Yes, there, within the heart, above the mind, there *was* a something real and true. Some spiritual teaching, it may be, which explained this tangled web of Life. Some truth discovered in sorrow nobly borne for others' sakes. Some truth in duty performed for duty's sake. Some glimpse of Love unfettered by self, a love that went out to the world and gave, and gave and gave again.

What can it matter? The fact remains that the heart which had yearned for something true and for some high companionship found these. It reached out for an ideal whose very existence was denied by the intellect. The heart prophesied the Beautiful which the mind could not discover. And why could mind not discover that Perfection? For a very simple reason which, simple as it is, has baffled whole races of mankind in turn. Because mind, Janus-faced, looks forward into matter and backward into, spirit, and reports duality and not identity. For mind, the experiencer and reporter, deals only with effects. It does not sense the Cause, the Rootless Root. And this is because mind cannot of itself discover the formless, for Mind, the Mind Universal, is itself the first manifested Form. Unto the formed, all things have form; unto the spiritual, all things are spirit. Now the Heart of Love is spiritual. I speak, *not* of Love as we, know it, for that is a reflected, distorted light. I speak of *Eros*, the One Ray, rather. Its reflection, pure and universal, is to be found in the heart of every human being. And the proper office of mind, the pioneer and discoverer of the objective world, is to cull experience after experience, and to offer these up to the heart, until that heart-star shall recall its ancient splendour, until it shall again see that truth and peace are not to be found in a world of reflected effects.

So the heart awoke, struggling with the vain assertions of matter, and all at once saw that itself was at once the runner and the goal, the seer and the thing seen. It came face to face with its Ideal and saw that Ideals are causes, saw that the Ideal is the only Real. Then with infinite pain it arose, and turned, back upon the world-path, and closed the eyes of the mind for a space upon the world of matter; it left the material husks and the brutish part of itself and strove to return to the Father. “Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of Lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” The heart reached up to that unchanging Father, the Elder Light that “lighteth every man that cometh into the world”. The Mahatma and that Light are not different.

Thus it was that the various scenes of Life passed very rapidly before me. In each I seemed to have a choice [17], and the choice appeared to be for either spirit or matter [18], for the formed or for the formless and unformulated, for evolution or against it, for rigidity and coagulation in a fixed, unprogressive mould, or away from the stationary to the ever-living. For the most part I appeared to understand all the varied experiences of this long, long Thought. But here and there were some I did not understand. I had, not fully tasted them. I had, as it were, been forced to quit them too soon.

So soon as this thought came before my mind [19], my experience divided itself into two parts. One part was made up of the higher impulses, the clear intuitions, the brightest dreams for others’ good. In these I felt a quiet certainty that I was upon the only path the soul could tread uprightly, the only path in which it could find full satisfaction, interior peace. In the other part a voice within seemed to whisper of great deeds to be done, glories to be achieved, knowledge of life to be attained, and through my whole being flashed an impulse towards action. I must be up and doing, I must come into objective contact with everything, I must prove everything, and that proof must be external, tangible, visible to the world. My very soul seemed to battle to and fro between these conditions, these two

parts of itself. Now the outer action was everything, and now the interior certainty alone was to be relied upon. My thoughts surged to and fro, like lightning flashes.

All at once I felt I could no longer struggle; I must go forth into Life and taste and feel and do. With this, a flame seemed to sweep over and devour me [20]. Every wish I ever had poured into my mind. Armies of wishes, myriads of desires, pressing upon me, tearing at me. More and more fiercely a bottomless sea of cravings poured in tumult through my brain. One interminable mad dance of remembrance, scene upon scene, picture after picture. Germs of I knew not what woke up and ran, in uproarious riot, through the brain, until lands and ships; stars and homes; men, women, creatures, and, angels; meadows and mountains; flowers, books, gems, food, fruits, garments, music, dreams; haunting eyes; snatching hands; innumerable faces; skies and herbage and growths of every clime; wars and silences; banners and colours; hopes, fears, alarms, wealth, disease, poverty, desires, danger, loves, hatreds; deaths, and lives, and all the content of the world of forms pressed in upon the brain in one vivid lightning bolt, distracting, inviting, receding, advancing, and I wanted to do all and to feel all, instantaneously, with a huge, insatiable appetite, a voracious maw for the whole of Sense-Life at a single breath.

I felt a hunger that no experience could satiate; an intolerable need to fill myself full with experience. I desired to lie abroad on all the hills, to live in all the creatures. I burned to be a thousand, a million human beings all at once, and to feel the palpitant, seething whole of life through a million channels; to play every part, to feel, *feel*, FEEL, till every sense was asleep; till every sensuous atom should fail and yet should know itself unsatisfied while yet one single point of Life remained, untasted, unabsorbed. This was the saturnalia of Desire. I was learning that the desire for Form-Life does not cease with gratification. I was in torment in the Kâma-loka [21], and the World-Desire made sport of me.

Yet not for long! Something within me arose [22] and bade the wild procession cease. It was that other part of me which arose, majestic, calm. From the inner place of peace rang out all clarion-wise and clear the deep “I AM” of the soul. As flee the miasmatic mists before the sun rays, so fled the troops of Desire before the sun of the soul. The deepest need of my nature manifested itself. It was the need of *being*, and not the desire of doing. The noblest dreams I had ever had of principles made manifest through duty done, arose, one by one, gracious and full of peace. I remembered that what I had ever needed and never found, *was* The Peace. And its doors flew open before me; and It became one with me, became my own soul. For I remembered the Teachers, the Light-bringers. I recalled the Master-Soul, the One. And at this thought a clear, sweet bell smote the air, and from the invisible spaces the Companions gathered round about and looked upon the Symbol of the Shadow; the Star of the one Darkness; the mystic emblem of Unity. And I remembered that I was one with Soul and Nature, and not separate, and my soul knelt before the One, the Unity, and adored Truth in silence. And so I entered the Peace. Thus doing, I dreamed, and now I was a sleeping Sphere [23], calmly resting as a “delicate milky film upon the golden ocean of light”, for I had unknowingly cast aside everybody and was a “dweller of the Sphere”, myself that Sphere.

The fret and fever were over, gone the turbulence of desire, the scintillating thoughts. In an infinite leisure I seemed to rest, to repose. Thought was all, was all in all, and my only thought was Peace. So I *was* Peace, in a state of Being where to think is to be. Then slowly arose and expanded before me the highest and holiest aspirations of my life. First, the loved ones, whom I had yearned to know fully. And one by one I knew their soul-selves completely. All their suppressed hopes and loves stood out before me; crystal clear. They were what they had longed to be and not what life had seemed to make them. Here and there must they have been scattered; some as human beings on earth; some as Spheres in the ether; but to me was no distinction; all dwelt in my heart; each was myself. Dream upon dream bloomed delicately before me; I experienced each one. Of each I took my fill. That is to say, I dwelt long in thought upon every noble ideal and lived each one through to the core. I seemed to assimilate each until I became the very thought itself. I had longed to uplift the downtrodden [24], and they filed before me, rich in experience, glorious through endurance, helpers of their fellows, saviours of the race. I had desired knowledge, and the stars defiled before me, giving up their secrets for the good of future races of men. I had pined, as the wayfarer in the desert pines for water, for the companionship of the true, the single-hearted, the unswerving companions of the order of Pain. And behold! these were within me and were my very selves, and together in a bond of unbroken sanctity we worked for millions yet unborn. Great Souls aided us. Great Spirits passed through us. Great Thoughts took form within us. We *Became*. And to us, so becoming, was revealed the great Vision. Man does not know it. Eye hath not seen it. Mind cannot name it. *It is*. The silver Spheres: bowed themselves and trembled; they opened their azure veils, and seemed to become one with the Unknowable as they dreamed the mystic Vision of the Grail, sainted and holy, the Vision of Humanity redeemed and godlike, the dream of the many becoming The One.

I dare not say more. I cannot if I would. Yet oh! my comrades, know this. The highest realization of the Heaven-World is a dream of the *selfless selves*. We are nothing there. We have vanished; In that life at its best there is only the goal, the attainment of unity for those who suffered separation; the realization of peace for the whole of all the worlds. No one is near. No one is far. All are; all rest in the whole of nature, one, indivisible, and at peace. It matters not whether any one beloved soul travails upon earth or sleeps near at hand, a singing Sphere; to the Sphere-dreamer all are himself, at peace with himself.

Do you ask me, brothers, what of those who labour still upon the groaning earth? What of the cruel wrongs that still endure? I admit that we ignore them in that Heaven-World which is to us the realization of all that is ripe and fair. And so, although we have well-earned all that dream of peace, or whatever state of bliss, becomes ours in the Dream-Land, still I say that the Heaven-World is still a state of Self. Fair as its outward and inward seeming may be, it is but an assimilation of our highest dreams. It is the highest subjective snare of souls. The Self-Existent is not found within that well-earned state of rest.

While thus these thoughts endured, they gradually came to lose all form [25]. You must remember that now my Consciousness was that of Thought only. In Thought I lived and

moved and had my being. And for a time, these thoughts were definite, were realizations of previous hopes and ideals. Let me illustrate for the sake of clearness. I had, while in objective earth-life, ties of perhaps unusual strength with a number of people, all of whom were working, in divers manners, towards a high and common ideal. On earth, we often differed, sometimes sharply; and yet the tie and the Ideal prevailed. At first, in the Heaven-World, I felt all my *special* comrades to be near me; those whom I best knew imparted, by their seeming nearness, a deep sweetness to my Thought. Presently I became *less* conscious of the identity of these friends with myself, and more conscious of that Ideal which we had shared. Thought of this Ideal expanded, until it grew greater than you can conceive, and this noble Ideal embraced all lands, all ages, all people, and all creatures, born and to be born.

As this beautiful Identity unfolded itself, Thought seemed to turn, with purity and harmony untold, towards every universal conception, in order to realize unity in all. Then all the worlds and beings became friends of my Thought. Then I knew, oh! my brothers, without discord, without separateness. Gone were those shapes of fear which hide us from one another. Gone the cruel masks which Life forces us to wear, the bodies which conceal us, the barriers between soul and soul. I saw you as you are, you Immortals, Inheritors and Rulers of a Kingdom not made with hands. Even our foes were our sterner selves only. We found Identity in difference, likeness in unlikeness; our souls looked upon one another, and with an ineffable impulse we united in The Ideal.

After this unspeakable moment the terms of consciousness changed. The universal laws began to be learned [26]. The unattainable knowledge drew near. Thought was expressed in musical numbers; then in sounds full of a meaning never to be expressed to mortal ear; finally in colours, living, mystical, wonderful, every colour expressing a formless spiritual Idea. And all this was myself, was yourselves, was one enraptured Ego. Yet I never lost the sense of individuality; the dewdrop was still distinct from the shining sea. So too, I knew each soul I loved, and when I came to love all souls and each was as my own Thought to me, still I had a distinct and separate consciousness of each. Yet all were One Thought.

Dreaming thus, Truth unfolding itself in flower-like hues, I seemed to sink deeper and yet deeper into a world of pure Ideation [27], formless, calm, but great with a power I cannot describe. A period of Thought-immersion passed. I do not know how first began that cause which brought my dream-existence to an end. I seemed first to feel vaguely, but with dismay, that all I knew was still the effect of a Cause that still escaped me. Nothing existed in and by, itself. All I knew was the Tree of Life and of Being, of the objective and the subjective. Where was the Root? [28] Where was the fountal well-spring of Being?

So soon as this idea moved into my mental vision, I seemed to become something separate from the Thought. Thought and I were rent in twain. Instead of rest in an Ideal, I wanted the Producer of the Ideal. The Self-Existent was wanting. Mind re-awoke and I observed my Thoughts and myself as two distinct entities, or as phases of one Ego. What was wanting to this Thought? Was I so sure that Thought was all? The Cause; the Cause; I

clamoured for the Cause. And a profound Echo answered me: “Thou thyself art that Cause.” I asked of that interior aerial Voice: Where shall I find myself?” And the Voice answered: “Not in the Heaven-World. Not in the world of effects and rewards whither desire for results hath brought thee”.

And then I saw the truth of this, and peace became odious to me. For it was a false peace, a mirage, a deception. In my consciousness dawned a tiny point of differentiation. Thought subdivided. I became as it were, at war with myself. I wearied of inaction. I wanted to retrace my steps [29]. Soul, the mighty, shook off its sloth, recognized that it was in a “No-Thoroughfare”, and girded itself for a return to objective action, hoping in that to find the clue to the final Cause. Then Mind, the critic and divider, again stood forth. Time followed after, coming again into view. The sense of ‘Time’ had been lost when unity prevailed. Separateness now awoke the consciousness of Time. From some unknown part of my being, burning points seemed to spring out, stinging me to action. Thought of action drove away the uniform peace. Pictures of deeds and men once more streamed by—a long unending blazing river of Life. My mind seemed to leap into action. It remembered forgotten things, things left undone, experiences untasted. Rest was a weariness; peace was an insipidity to this burning warrior mind. True, a dim and distant part of myself seemed to look upon the restless Thinker in cold estrangement. My soul quivered, hesitated between the two aspects of itself, hung poised, as it were, between sleep and action.

All at once, I knew not from whence, a torrent of sound swept over, the blare of the world stung my unaccustomed sense. From some gulf far away arose the tumult of Living. I realized that I had forgotten Life in dreams. With all the strength of my being I longed to reach Life again, to feel, to work, to act, to be.

A mad shudder swept Thought away, I became conscious of myself as a separate thing. I became conscious of the starry spaces, the Spheres, the Heaven-land. Out of the deeps of my being rose a cry, the cry for Life, for action. And the cry was answered. The Heaven-world disappeared. The starry spaces rolled together like a scroll. Down, down, in a red gulf, I saw the red world. Between that world and me rolled a phantasmagoria; the Life to come in all its turbulence passed, as it were, across a screen. I was that screen. I knew it all [30]. Yet was I undeterred, undismayed. The Life-thirst was upon me. I must greedily drink the whole of Life again.

Over the gulf I leaned; I felt myself take form in one unforgettable throe. Discords shrilled through me. Clamour pervaded me. Mad forces warred and keen desires jarred me. The grandeur of action thrilled me. I could not pause. I must look again on Life. I must be my own, one separate Self again. A, second throb, and I was born into my Sphere [31], a form in a world whence forms must fall. I gathered myself together. Over the red gulf I leaned. Its exhalations made my consciousness reel. Into that gulf I plunged, for I must live once more. Even as I fell, I felt a fierce keen joy, as of a conscious flame shooting into a sea of flames.

And then? Then a crash. Then Darkness. Then an end. There was only annihilation until I awoke. Where? In the world of forms. Here, where form conceals the soul. Here, where I have lost my Heaven comrades. Here, where I find so few of you, my brothers! Here, where I put out groping hands and cannot touch you; eyes that are wistful and cannot see you for the tears. The heart calls, and hears no answer. Its call was too weak. Its faith was too small a thing. Where are you, oh my brothers? Let us not longer hide from one another. Let us look upon Life and one another as Souls set within one Universal, Eternal Soul. Then perhaps, we shall see.

For, as in the Heaven-World [32] the Heaven was our unity, so even here, all about us, a truer Heaven lies. If we will seek for identity and not for difference, we shall find the Heaven of fraternal Thought, and we shall find it, not in the place of dreams, but in this land where we stand, and to which we have come for one another, in order to meet one another, to experience and know one another. Each is here for each and for all. Why do we not remember our dependence upon one another? Each one of us is, as it were, an embrasure from which a different facet of Life is to be seen. Learning one another, we may learn the whole of Life, we may embrace the whole of Existence. From that whole and from it alone, the secret of the Unmanifested is to be gathered. For know this, Minds may differ; they differ as to formulae. Formulae are the forms of the Mind, the pictures cast upon the Screen of Life by various orders of minds. But hearts do not differ. The heart always ignores the differentiations of formulae, or forms, and relies upon the, underlying unity, the identity of aim or of Nature. "One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin." In these feelings of a substratum of identity the highest secrets are locked up. In them is a key to a higher place than the Heaven-World, the Svarga Land. That place is the Land of the Divine Darkness, the Causal Fountain. It is the home of the Self-Existent [33]. It is where Non-Being, or the Ideal, has not yet gone forth into manifested Being.

Need I say more? I think not. You will have seen that the atoms of Desire inherent in the Sphere woke up from their latent subjective condition and vibrated newly toward another Life, a birth into the manifested worlds again, for the subjective current had died away. The cycle of objectivity had reawakened. Under the play of this new force the Life-atoms felt the breath of their lower fires and tended to the lower world. Desire of objective Life bred objective form, and form bred need of objective action [34], and by this path I returned from the Heaven-world. Yes, I returned, still seeking the Root of Being.

I awoke. I was lying in my bed. The winter wind blew over me. The house I had re-entered, that house I call my body, was stiff and stark. I awoke in the outer skies [35]; I was drawn towards the chill body by a vital cord, as it were. The body was hideous. It was shrunk, emaciated, drawn. I loathed to enter such a dwelling. The sun was rising redly over the empurpled trees of the great wide park. I hesitated. I thought to take the path of the sun. I could not come in contact with that form like a shriveled monkey. All at once I saw the Messenger beside me. He touched my forehead. My eyes unclosed. I saw that this hideous parchment body lay across the knees of one who wept bitterly, who, weeping, upheld it to

the rays of the rising sun, and called upon the Sun of Life, and called upon the hidden Sun of Souls, and wept bitterly.

“Wilt thou re-enter?” said the Messenger. “I will re-enter,” I answered. “For what reason?” asked the Messenger. Fiercely I turned upon him. “To quench one human tear, will I re-enter”, cried I. The Messenger bowed his head, “Enter in the name of the Lords of the Law, and mayst thou be blessed in thy pilgrimage towards the hidden Sun” he whispered. He withdrew, and shuddering, I re-entered that horrid form as one enters the darkness of the mother’s womb. A shock, a shudder; and then I felt no more, I knew nothing.

I awoke [36]. I was again conscious of the bodily environment. Like a heavy weight it surrounded me. My dulled ears heard a low sound. The sound grew a little louder. It was a curious sound; commingled gasps and sobs, with a note as of laughter. Someone was weeping for joy. Someone rejoiced to regain me. I looked down upon the comrade weeping with bended head. And I too wept in that cramped house, my body. I wept to feel that my Soul and I were twain. God—the One Life—had joined us together, and man, the human mind, desirous of new experience, had put us asunder.

My comrade wept for joy. I wept, but for sorrow. The comrade was glad to rejoin me. I was sad, for in the Heaven-World we had been wholly one; in the world of forms we must know some separation. Here we were twain. Here we were shut away from one another by bodily environment and differentiation of mind. In the Heaven-World I had leaned upon the twin-soul, I had become one with all souls amidst unnumbered glories; here must I vainly seek the beloved souls beneath the garb of form! Form, which hides us from one another! Mind, whose differences prevent our recognizing one another! How bitter the thought! I had tasted at least a higher form of union in the Heaven-World, and with that memory still freshly upon me, the highest form seemed but dull, gross earth. So we wept together; one for joy, one for sorrow. He, because he had regained me in the flesh. I, because I lost him in the flesh. Slowly we came to look, each upon the other’s grief, and to understand each the other. Repentant, he cried: “I have dragged thee back to earth”. Repentant, I moaned to him “I would have cut thee off from experience and from duty, because I longed to roam the heavenly fields with thee”. As each entered upon the feeling of the other, the heart of pity made us one again.

The Messenger stood before us. He spoke thus: “Do you not see that in Compassion and in duty done for duty’s sake alone, lies the path to the Self-Existent? All else is Desire of Results and lands you in the World of Effects [37]. The Sphere blossoms forth into objectivity [38] and indraws into the root of subjectivity [39], but Permanence is only found when the human heart desires no results, but hungers for the Self-Existent Cause alone.”

He vanished. We clung together, and the Truth came home to our minds. In the heart of Compassion only, in duty done for the sake of all, in pure Renunciation of result for self, thus alone can mankind escape the snare of the Heaven-World, the exalted dreams of an

exalted Egoism; thus alone can the soul know itself [40], pure as the first dawn, strong as the Eternal; thus alone can mankind become the indivisible One Self, thus only can the sleeping Spheres become the universal Sphere, the Ring “Pass-Not”—the Manvantaric Goal, the Root, the Unity.

Jasper Niemand

COMMENTARY

I. The Objective Vision

1. *The Messenger*

Although J.N. does not indicate who this Messenger was, from the fact that R.S. was taught at nights by H.P.B. it is more than probable that H.P.B. was that Messenger. We do not know the date of the vision. The date of its publication (July 1893) was two years after H.P.B.’s death and nearly two years after J.N.’s marriage to Dr. Keightley. But although the comrade spoken of in “The Sleeping Spheres” is certainly Dr. Keightley, there are no indications that the comrade was already her husband. But even if she were married when she experienced the life of a sleeping Sphere, it does not preclude the possibility of H.P.B. being the Messenger. R.S. in the above-mentioned letter to Countess Wachtmeister describes how H.P.B., after her departure continued to visit R.S. several times, although in masculine guise.

2. *Devachan*

This word has often been misrepresented as derived from the Sanskrit and still more often is mispronounced. It is a purely Tibetan word and although it has the same meaning as the Sanskrit deva-loka, its etymology is quite different. It comes from the root bde-ba, meaning, to be happy, to be well; happy, easy; happiness. This root is, therefore, at the same time a verb, an adjective and a noun, and its Sanskrit equivalents are, among others: subha, sukha, and kusala. To this root, bde-ba, is added the Tibetan affix ‘can’, signifying: having, being provided with, etc. Jaschke gives as meaning of bde-ba-can: the land of bliss (Sanskrit: sukhavati) a sort of heaven or paradise, in the far west, the abode of Dhyanī Buddha Amitabha (270). Sarat Chandra Das gives in his *A Tibetan-English Dictionary* (1902): “Bde-wa-can, Dewachan, the paradise of the Northern Buddhists” (p. 670). Madame Alexandra David-Neel, the famous explorer of Mystic Tibet, writes in *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, “the Paradise of the Great Bliss (Nub Dewachen),” giving a correct phonetic transcription of the word (*op. cit.* 52). Again, on page 121 she writes: “The Dhyanī Buddha Ödpagmed, of whom the Tashi Lama is the *tulku*, resides in the Western Paradise, Nub dewachen.”

As to the correct pronunciation of bde-ba-can: the first b is mute; the second b is pronounced in Lhasa as our w; the d, e, and first a are pronounced like the corresponding

sounds in Spanish; the c is pronounced as the ch in “church”; while the second a is pronounced in Lhasa. as the e in “when”; finally, the n is equivalent to the English n. (See also ML:373 and *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, pp. 220 fn. 2, 246 fn. 2).

3. *Spheres, having condition but no place*

An analogy, is a wave on the ocean, of which it is impossible, or rather meaningless, to fix the place, and of which the constituent particles are constantly changing place with others. “Condition” refers to the rate and intensity of the vibration. “The centre of Devachanic activity cannot be localized” (*The Theosophist* IV:268).

4. *Cohering by means of their own vibration*

Here a general statement is made about the rationale of attraction, a subject as yet unexplained by modern science. Those acquainted with the laws of electricity and magnetism know that between two electric currents going in parallel paths in the same direction, there exists an attractive force, called electrodynamic, which is made use of in many electrical instruments and motors.

5. *Into the Air*

The element air, in Sanskrit vayu, is here meant, and not the air we breathe.

6. *The airy body*

The mayavirupa of Theosophy.

7. *Changing their consciousness; fusing them anew* (p. 4, col. 2)

The Spheres are transitory, changing from stage to stage, not only in form, but even in their constituent active elements. The energy, stored up within the Spheres during the lifetime of the indwelling Ego, dissipates objectively in the form of vibrations. Subjectively these vibrations correspond to thoughts and ideas of a spiritual nature.

8. *I soon observed a marked change*

It must not be inferred that Devachan is of a very short duration—on the contrary, it lasts very much longer than the corresponding life on earth, as it is one of spiritual digestion and assimilation, so to say. J.N. was made to see the various stages in Devachan in rapid succession, just as psychometers see a series of pictures passing with extraordinary rapidity before their inner eye, pictures pertaining not only to different parts of space, but also to different periods of time.

9. *The Spheres grandly awoke*

A change of consciousness is meant here, analogous, but not similar, to that of waking up from a night’s sleep. It is the passage from a world of effects to one of causes.

10. *The end of all desire*

Of all *spiritual* desire; as in Devachan the unfulfilled spiritual desires of the personality are satisfied until the complete exhaustion of their original impulse, when the forces of Tanha carry the Monad back to rebirth.

11. *Efforts towards crystallization*

The collecting of the Skandhas, the formation of a new astral body, is here described.

12. *Still I wept*

This corroborates her statement that her consciousness “was that of the airy body only.”

COMMENTARY

II. The Subjective Experience

13. *Devachan is the subjective existence of the personal and higher Ego*

The personal Ego is that aspect of manas which manifests as a specific personality and is generally called the “lower manas.” It consists of two parts, one of which, the animal part, is subject to Kama, the desire principle, while the other part follows the light of Buddhi, the immortal Monad. After death this spiritual part of the lower manas is assimilated by the higher manas, the incarnating Ego, and goes as “Manas-taijasi” to Devachan. The dissipation of the stored-up energies of Manas-taijasi produces the subjective devachanic life. “It is a law of occult dynamics that ‘a given amount of energy expended on the spiritual or astral plane is productive of far greater results than the same amount expended on the physical objective plane of existence’.” (SD 1:644). And with regard to the long time passed in the devachanic state, note the explanation of T. Subba Row Garu: “Energy exerted on the astral plane produces effects which last for a longer period of time than those produced by an equal amount of energy on the material plane, for the reason that less friction or opposition is encountered on the astral plane.” (*The Theosophist* VI:110). To this may be added the fact, demonstrated by modern science, that on the subtler planes greater amounts of energy are found associated with matter. It is sufficient to consider the quantities of mass associated with equal amounts of mechanical, chemical and nuclear energies, to realize the likelihood of encountering on still subtler planes larger and larger amounts of energy.

14. *This Higher Self is a state of the Sphere*

This state is known as Nirvana by the Buddhists and is the highest spiritual state attainable by man while incarnated on earth.

15. *To compare the two events*

Apparently J.N. never wrote the promised comparison.

16. *I fell into Thought*

“At the last moment, the whole life is reflected in our memory and emerges from all the forgotten nooks and corners, picture after picture, one event after the other. The dying brain dislodges memory with a strong supreme impulse, and memory restores faithfully every impression entrusted to it during the period of the brain's activity... No man dies

insane or unconscious... The man may often appear dead. Yet from the last pulsation, from and between the last throbbing of his heart and the moment when the last spark of animal heat leaves the body—the *brain thinks* and the *Ego* lives over in those few brief seconds his whole life over again. Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a death-bed... Especially have you to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting on its reflection upon the Veil of the Future.” M.L.-170-171). “The experience of dying men—by drowning and other accidents—brought back to life, has corroborated our doctrine in almost every case” (ML:170). “The events of a long life, to their minutest details, are marshalled in the greatest order in a few seconds in our vision” (ML:128). Dr. Carl Du Prel enumerates many instances of such “Memory in the Dying” (*Philosophy of Mysticism*, I:92-93, II:42-50) and so does H.P.B. in her article “Memory in the Dying” (*Lucifer* V:125-129). [CW XI:446-453]

17. *In each I seemed to have e choice*

In this “death-bed vision” the Ego views the pictures from its own exalted position. The memory of the kamic organs of the body cannot interfere, because these organs are already dead. “The brain is the last organ that dies” (ML:128fn.). Hence the Ego will be its own judge during this vision. Admiral Beaufort had the same experience upon having fallen into the water and having lost normal consciousness: “...in short, the whole period of my existence seemed to be placed before me in a *kind of panoramic review*, and every act of it seemed to be accompanied by a consciousness of right and wrong, or by some reflection on its cause or its consequences...” (Du Prel, *op. cit.* I-93)

18. *The choice appeared to be for either Spirit or Matter*

Quite right, because in the final instance these are the only alternatives. All our deeds can be classified in either one or the other of these two categories. But their full significance implies much more than is commonly realized. Let the student keep this constantly in mind!

19. *So soon as this thought came before my mind*

Here we have the first deviation from a normal post-mortem process. Had J. N. really died she would have lost consciousness at this point. “Every just disembodied four-fold entity—whether it died a natural or violent death, from suicide or accident, mentally sane or insane, young or old, good, bad, or indifferent—loses at the instant of death all recollection, it is mentally—*annihilated*; it sleeps its akasic sleep in the Kama-loka.” (ML:186-7).

20. *A flame seemed to sweep over and devour me*

Now comes a description, a medley of images, a motley crowd typical of a confused state such as one may imagine Kama-loka to be *at its best*. For those who die a natural death, the interval of Kama-loka is described as follows by a Tibetan Ge-long of the Inner Temple—a disciple of Bas-pa Dharma, the Secret Doctrine (the Bumapa?): “According

to the karma of the previous birth the interval of latency [*i.e.*, Kama-loka, W.B.R.]—generally passed in a state of stupor—will last from a few minutes to an average of a few weeks, perhaps months...” (*Lucifer* XV:100, “Tibetan Teaching”).* Again Mahatma K.H. writes: “From Kama-loka then in the great Chiliocosm—once awakened from their post-mortem torpor, the newly translated ‘Souls’ go all (*but the shells*) according to their attractions, either to Devachan or Avitchi... Reviving consciousness begins after the struggle in Kama-Loka at the door of devachan, and only after the ‘gestation period’.” (ML:199-200).

* See CW VI:108.

21. *I was in torment in the Kama-loka*

As J.N. had not really died, no separation between her “shell” (the Kama-rupa, or form of Desire) and her Ego had taken place. So it was possible for her to pass consciously through a quasi Kama-loka, and bring its remembrance back upon returning to her body. In Kama-loka dwell the shells, which are soulless entities: the victims of accident and violence; the suicides; the Mara-rupas, doomed to annihilation in the Eighth Sphere; and the Rakshasas, astral forms of sorcerers (*cf.* ML:107, 198). But not even these are necessarily subject to suffering—only the very wicked and impure suffer there all the tortures of a horrible nightmare, lasting years (*cf.* ML:123, 136).

22. *Something within me arose*

Here her kama-lokic condition ends and the next few short paragraphs describe her transition to the state of Devachan. Again, due to her exceptional condition, there is a great difference between her transitional state and that “Gestation State” which is normally preparatory to Devachan. This Gestation State lasts very long, yet is proportionate to the Ego’s spiritual stamina (*cf.* ML:105). The consciousness... “will return slowly and gradually toward the end of the gestation... and *fully* to the Ego at the moment of its entrance into the Devachan ... the Ego does not fall headlong but sinks into it gradually and by easy stages. With the first dawn of that state appears that life (or rather *is once more lived over* by the Ego) from its first day of consciousness to its last. From the most important down to the most trifling event, all are marshalled before the spiritual eye of the Ego; only, unlike the events of real life, those of them remain only that are chosen by the new *liver* (pardon the word) clinging to certain scenes and actors, these remain *permanently*—while all the others fade away to disappear forever, or to return to their creator—the *shell*... Out of the resurrected Past *nothing* remains but what the Ego has felt *spiritually*...” (ML:187).

23. *And now I was a sleeping Sphere*

Here her Devachan starts with one of the divisions of Rupa-loka where forms and personalities are still perceived.

24. *I had longed to uplift the downtrodden*

She passes now to a higher and less personal realm of Rupa-loka.

25. *These thoughts... gradually came to lose all form*

This happens in the highest division of Rupa-loka, preparatory to the entering of the Arupa, or formless world.

26. *The universal Laws began to be learned*

The first division of the Arupa-loka is purely mental. Knowledge is the one object in Arupa-loka, starting with the concrete and gradually changing into the abstract.

27. *I seemed to sink deeper and yet deeper into a world of pure Ideation*

Now she progresses farther and farther into the Arupa regions. Her power to describe these regions becomes more and more limited.

28. *Where was the Root?*

This clamour, this desire for that which cannot be found even in the highest of the Arupa regions, again constitutes an essential difference between J.N.'s conditions and that of a real Devachani. No dissatisfaction ever mars the thoughts of the latter and all that now follows is therefore due to her not being really dead, but being still a complete sevenfold entity. This also explains why the peace became hateful to her.

29. *I wanted to retrace my steps*

This shows that J.N. possessed the element of reflective consciousness which in devachanis is always lacking: "Although the spiritual energy evolved by an inhabitant of Devachan is a factor in the spiritual development of the race, yet the entity wanting in the element of self-consciousness (as all entities are in Kama-loka and Devachan when left to themselves), cannot be credited with unselfishness any more than the tree can be styled unselfish for affording a shelter to the weary passerby. In each fact of consciousness there are two elements, the mere perception and the reflective consciousness of that perception." (Mohini M. Chatterji, *The Theosophist* VI:143). In Devachan there is never a longing to return upon one's steps: "The disincarnate must consecutively mount each ring of the ladder of being upward from the earthly subjective to the *absolutely* subjective. And when this limited Nirvanic state of Devachan is attained, the entity enjoys it and its vivid though spiritual realities until that phase of Karma is satisfied and the physical attraction to the next earth life asserts itself." (*The Theosophist* IV:271). The Devachan ends very gradually: "As in actual earth-life, so there is for the Ego in devachan—the first flutter of psychic life, the attainment of prime, the gradual exhaustion of force passing into semi-unconsciousness, gradual oblivion and lethargy, total oblivion and—not death but birth: birth into another personality..." (ML:195) . This is quite different from the way J.N. returns from her Devachan.

30. *I knew it all*

Compare this statement with H.P.B.'s: "As the man at the moment of death has a retrospective insight into the life he has led, so, at the moment he is reborn on to earth, the *Ego*, awaking from the state of Devachan, has a prospective vision of the life which awaits him, and realizes all the causes that have led to it. He realizes them and sees futurity, because it is between Devachan and rebirth that the *Ego* regains his full *manasic* consciousness and rebecomes for a short time the god he was, before, in compliance with Karmic Law, he first descended into matter..." (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 162-3).

31. *I was born into my Sphere*

Her consciousness shifted towards a more concrete center within the Devachanic Sphere.

32. *The Heaven-World*

Svarga-loka, deva-loka, devachan, sukhavati, are all names for the same post-mortem state.

33. *The home of the Self-Existent*

The Self-Existent, or Svayambhu, is the Universal Spirit. The highest aspect of Svabhavat is its "abode."

34. *Form bred need of objective action*

Because form by itself is not permanent, but needs to be maintained by objective, *i.e.*, outward intercourse.

35. *I awoke in the outer skies*

She awoke in her astral body, the mayavi rupa.

36. *I awoke*

Now she has entered her physical body and has returned to ordinary life again.

37. *The world of effects*

Devachan is meant.

38. *The Sphere blossoms forth into objectivity*

The Sphere is begotten during conscious and responsible life on earth. Irresponsible entities, like children before their seventh year, and congenital idiots, will have no Devachan, but are almost immediately reborn.

39. *And indraws into the root of subjectivity*

The Sphere dissipates its energies gradually in Devachan and perishes of exhaustion at the end in the highest Arupa-loka, the root of subjectivity.

40. *Thus alone can the soul know itself*

“According to Esoteric Doctrine this evolution is not viewed as the extinguishment of individual consciousness but its infinite expansion. The entity is not obliterated, but united with the universal entity, and its consciousness becomes able not merely to recall the scenes of one of its earth-evolved Personalities, but of each of the entire series around the Kalpa, and then those of every other Personality. In short, from being finite it becomes infinite consciousness. But this comes only at the end of all the births at the great day of the absolute Resurrection. Yet, as the monad moves on from birth to birth and passes its lower and Devachanic spheres after each fresh earthly existence, the mutual ties created in each birth must weaken and at last grow inert, before it can be reborn. The record of those relationships imperishably endures in the Akasa, and they can always be reviewed, when, in any birth, the being evolves his latent spiritual powers to the ‘fourth stage of Dhyana’: but their hold upon the being gradually relaxes. This is accomplished in each inter-natal Devachan... Were this obliteration of personal ties not a fact, each being would be travelling around the Kalpa entangled in the meshes of his past relationships with his myriad fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives, etc., etc., of his numberless births: a jumble, indeed!” (*The Theosophist* IV:271-272).

It must be realized by the student that the above covers only a very small fragment of the subject of the post-mortem life. J.N.’s narrative covers the experiences of a rather unusual personality, one already acquainted with Theosophy and in possession of certain clairvoyant powers. A more common human being would have quite different experiences, although the general laws governing the devachanic state are, of course, applicable in all cases. Finally, the reader must not forget that deaths by accident, violence or suicide produce their own peculiar effects upon the post-mortem condition. Also, the postmortem states of spiritually evil beings, of sorcerers and of soulless entities, are very different from the one described above, and would need a separate discussion.

Willem B. Roos.

Key to abbreviated references and authors:

CW: *H. P. Blavatsky, Collected Writings*, compiled by Boris De Zirkoff

ML: *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, compiled by A.T. Barker

SD: *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P. Blavatsky

A Tibetan-English Dictionary, Sarat Chandra Das

Letters That Have Helped Me, W.Q. Judge

Magic and Mystery in Tibet, Alexandra David-Neel

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The Philosophy of Mysticism, Carl Du Prel

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