

LIFE EVOLVES IN CYCLES

By Clara Codd

Have you ever noticed a universal fact that life moves in a cyclic manner, always returning upon itself but on a higher level? Did you ever know an evening that was not followed by another morning, or a winter that was not followed by another spring? A night of rest and assimilation follows a day of activity, and just as what we do today is the outcome of the yesterdays and the generator of what will happen tomorrow, so one life and its events and circumstances are the outcome of all the lives behind us, and this one is the forerunner of events to come. St. Clement of Alexandria wrote just that. "Every soul comes into the world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the defeats of its previous life. Its place in this world as a vessel appointed to honor or dishonor is determined by its previous merits or demerits. Its work in this world determines its place in the world which is to follow this." Sometimes a soul is not weakened by defects but strengthened by conquering them.



All nature follows the same law. During the winter the life in the flowers and the trees seems to be quiescent, but it is there, awaiting the spring once more. The same sequence is seen in the life of a human being. There is the morning, the noonday and the evening of a day, and the spring, summer, autumn and winter of a year, and also the youth, maturity, and old age of a person's lifespan. Just as we come back refreshed by a night's rest, so we come back full of youthful vitality once more in a new and vital body. Because the hour is ripe, another day of experience and growth dawns for us in our new young body, and we bring with it a new mind and heart which contain the seeds of all that we have thought and felt in the long past. A baby is not a new creation.

Why does a baby come to us? Because we have loved and known him in the past, and so he comes to our care while his body is young and defenseless. For love is a strong attractive force and forms bonds, which can never be broken. Hate also, alas! So very occasionally a family bond is thus formed. The only thing in us, which is not new because it is immortal and ever developing, is our spiritual selves. H.P.B.¹ says that the Angelic Hosts put that Immortal Self in touch with his new body at the moment before birth called "quickenings." And the bond thus formed draws the personality after

¹ Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

death into that wonderful plane called *Devachan*, the “Home of the Gods,” the Heaven-world. After a long period of rest and fulfillment there, the Immortal Self again looks earthward and comes back to a new, fresh body and a new, fresh mind and heart, which are the outcome of the old ones. The bonds formed with other egos can never be broken and lead us to meet them again and again.

The greatest cycle of all is the immortal journey of the human spirit, out from the divine pleroma as an unconscious nascent possibility, to return a fully conscious, fully developed “Son of God.” This greatest cycle of all is called in the Indian scriptures the Path of Outgoing, the *Pravritti Marga*, and the Path of Return, the *Nivritti Marga*. Plato called this journey the Great Arc. We are all on this great path. Some are much nearer to the Return Path than others. In the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* the disciple says to the Guru: “I sense One Flame, O Gurudeva, and countless undetached sparks shining therein.” These undetached “sparks” are our spiritual selves, who have never left the “Garden of Eden,” that is, the inner spiritual realms, but have put down a limited representative to gather the fruits of these worlds of experience. Charles W. Leadbeater used to say that it was like putting out an arm and then drawing it back. And the arm thinks it is the whole thing! That putting out and drawing back is called by us a “life.” The eternal Self in us does this for very many lives. Why? Because the divine possibility seeks contact with the material planes in order to develop vehicles of consciousness on all the planes of Nature.

It is this desire of the divine possibility in each of us to contact matter and the material worlds, to conquer and understand them, which leads us out into manifestation. The “undetached sparks” are unconscious, nascent, but by sending their representatives down here into matter, they slowly evolve self-consciousness and self-motivation, and one day become conscious “Gods,” endowed with the powers of that Life and Consciousness from which they came. And thus a “Son of God” is born from him who seemed only a “Son of Man.” The return Home, H. P. B. says, is brought about “first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts, checked by its Karma.”² In *The Mahatma Letters*, we are told that Adepts “become, they are not made.”³ We are all incipient Adepts.

On the Outgoing Path, as I said, the spiritual individual evolved vehicles of consciousness on all the planes of Nature. Each of these vehicles rules in turn, and by ruling develops. On the Return Path the divine nature itself begins to awake, and takes over. This is the “birth of the Christ” in us, “the hope of glory.” The gradual purification and growth of the aspiring soul and body have prepared the way for the birth of the spiritual consciousness in us. That is always our ultimate destiny. As St.

² *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 45.

³ *The Mahatma Letters*, p. 310, 2nd ed.; p. 305, 3rd ed

Augustine puts it: “We were created for Thee, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

These great arcs are named in the Christian scriptures the Fall (into matter), and the Redemption (into Spirit). The story of the Garden of Eden is a very ancient allegory of this evolution of humanity. It is far older than the Christian scriptures, or even the Jewish ones, for the picture of a man and a woman with a tree and a serpent has been found on stones and jewels in the ruins of ancient Chaldea. The serpent is an age-old symbol of the product of a former evolution, an Initiate, “Naga,” serpent. Did not the Christ tell His disciples to become “as wise as serpents”? Thus was the divine possibility led out of the Garden of Eden and brought under the play of “pairs of opposites” as the East would call it, and drawn to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as the West would phrase it.

Have you noticed another great fact—the unceasing play of the pairs of opposites? Is there anything, which does not have its opposite? And what do they do for humanity? Their unceasing play gradually evolves self-consciousness and self-motivation. Why? That we may know *how* to choose the good and reject the evil, says the Bible. The final pair of opposites are “good” and “evil”; and God and the spiritual Self are beyond both of them.

So this great cycle of the outgoing and return of the spirit in the human being has a wonderful and splendid purpose. We go out ignorant and undeveloped. We return a god in wisdom and power, understanding all the planes of Nature, and able to function on all of them. In the story of the Garden of Eden there was another tree, guarded by a Cherubim with a flaming sword. The Cherubim symbolizes the higher consciousness (*Light on the Path* calls him “the Warrior within”) and the sword is always emblematical of the will. When the hour is ripe, the “lower” self will become one with the “higher” Self, and the consciousness of immortality will be his.

I have been asked whether our free will is inherently dual. Our free will is first of all exercised down here to get things for the temporal self. But by that we grow. When the spiritual consciousness is born, our lesser will has become one with the One Will, the will of the universe. In the words of Alfred Tennyson:

Our wills are ours, we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

The Christ calls the higher nature in man “the angel” in a man which “doth always behold the face of my Father in Heaven.” Sometimes He also speaks of that higher consciousness as “the pearl of great price,” which is deeply hidden and has to be dug for, and at the price of all that which a person has.

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The difference between the soul who descends or falls into matter and the soul who has returned, is the difference between a newborn babe and a full-grown person. We may say, “Why do we have to grow to our stature and fullness with so much pain and trouble?” But it is a universal law of Nature. Every form of life begins in an infinitesimal beginning and the wonder of it is that in that tiny beginning is held all the promise and potency of that which is afterwards revealed. Who, to look at an acorn, would realize—if they did not know—that here lies the future giant of the forest? And who, to look at ordinary human being, can realize that here is a nascent god in the making?

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