

PART 3

Characteristics of the Different Kingdoms

TO ACHIEVE complete development of consciousness in the human form, the evolutionary process had to take seven major leaps, viz., from stone to metal, from metal to vegetable, from vegetable to worm, from worm to fish, from fish to bird, from bird to animal and finally from animal to the human being, each possessing different characteristics.

Characteristics of the Kingdom of Stones and the Kingdom of Metals

In the stone-forms and metal-forms, the soul has its initial experiences of the gross world. The kingdom of metals, like the kingdom of stones, is inorganic and solid. Both kingdoms include within their range a rich variety of species. In the solid states of stones and metals, life and energy are dormant. Therefore they are regarded as inanimate. The stone-forms and metal-forms cannot move about by themselves, *i.e.*, they have no voluntary motion. For this reason the consciousness, which associates itself with these forms, tends to assert itself through a recumbent, horizontal position (rather than through an erect position or vertical, upright stand) in the gross world.

Characteristics of the Vegetable Kingdom

In the vegetable kingdom, consciousness realizes itself as half animate and half inanimate. The increased consciousness of the vegetable-form asserts its existence in the gross world through an upright or erect stand. The vegetable-forms have to take the help

of some other things such as earth or rock for maintaining an erect position. They can neither stand by themselves nor move voluntarily from place to place since they are rooted in one spot.

Characteristics of the Kingdom of Worms

In worm-consciousness the soul gathers experiences of voluntary movement. It experiences itself as animate. In its travail to gain more and further consciousness, the worm-conscious soul experiences itself in the gross world, first as an invertebrate and later as a vertebrate, and goes on creeping in diverse species of worms. Voluntary movements are made by crawling by means of pairs of legs, sometimes by multiple pairs of legs, and sometimes by pairs of legs and pairs of wings. Worms may have surfaces that are hairy, smooth, silky, rough or scaly. The worm goes through a struggle for existence and survival and is endowed with sensation and life. Sometimes it is an amphibian, *i.e.*, it has not only voluntary movement on earth, but has also mobility in water. For the purpose of this explanation, the worm-form includes all worms, insects, reptiles and amphibia, of their species. Even when they have legs and wings, they have a tendency to crawl and they are distinct from birds and from quadruped animals. The worm-form is recumbent, has no upright or erect stand and is prone to lie prostrate.

Characteristics of the Kingdom of Fish

The fish-conscious soul identifies itself with varied species of fish and experiences the gross world as a living creature in water (a vertebrate endowed with life and sensation and voluntary motion), and has fins. It goes through a struggle for sustenance and survival. The fish-conscious soul does not assert its existence in the gross world through an erect stand, but experiences itself as recumbent, never holding its head high and erect.

Characteristics of the Kingdom of Birds

The bird-form enriches (enlightens) consciousness with new experiences since, as a feathered vertebrate, it is capable of flying

in the air and, with the help of its two legs, of maintaining an erect stand in the gross world.

Characteristics of the Kingdom of Animals

The animal-form brings to consciousness further expansion, since it can yield new experiences through the greater varieties existing in the kingdom of animals. Endowed with life, sensation and power of voluntary locomotion, quadruped animals have to face a struggle for existence and survival. They are sometimes herbivorous and sometimes carnivorous. Animal consciousness does not assert its existence in the gross world through erect or upright posture, but has a tendency to look downwards with drooping head. Apes, however, are the most evolved type of animals, and they tend to stand erect like human beings.

Characteristics of the Kingdom of Human Beings

In the human-form the evolving consciousness of the soul attains its full development. The process of evolution of consciousness has its terminus in the human form. Here consciousness is full and complete.

When a human being is born, it can only lie prostrate and it continues to experience this state for a fairly long period. But it soon expresses a tendency first to sit erect and then to stand erect. The fully evolved human consciousness of the soul eventually asserts its existence in the gross world through an upright position.*

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The Ascending Soul

I died as mineral and became a plant,
 I died as plant and rose to animal,
 I died as animal and I was man.
 Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
 Yet, once more, I shall die as man, to soar
 With angels blessed; but even from angelhood
 I must pass on; all except God doth perish.
 When I have sacrificed my angel soul,
 I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
 Oh, Let me not exist! For Non-existence
 Proclaims in organ tones, "To Him we shall return!"

—Rumi

PART 4

Reincarnation and the Impressionless Equipoise of Consciousness

DURING the course of evolution of its consciousness, the soul (*atma*), while **consciously** identifying itself with varied, finite gross forms, was also simultaneously, though **unconsciously**, identifying itself with its finite subtle form and its finite mental form, which associated with the soul in compact, homogeneous, unconscious alliance throughout the entire course of evolution of consciousness right from the first urge.

Although the soul frequently and consciously dissociated itself from the finite gross forms which acted as media to experience the impressions gained in the course of evolving greater and higher consciousness, the soul could never dissociate itself, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, from its finite subtle form and its finite mental form.

On the contrary, while the soul dissociated its identification with any one medium of finite gross form, it was the unconscious association of soul with its finite subtle form that fortified the soul (now without any gross medium) with finite energy (the driving force) to give a tendency to the consciousness of the soul towards identifying itself with the next medium of the next finite gross form, in order to experience the impressions of the last dissociated finite gross form, retained and reflected by the finite mental form of this soul.

It is but natural that, together with the evolution of higher and greater consciousness of soul, the evolution of the finite subtle form of soul also takes place to fortify the soul with greater finite

energy to incline the consciousness of the more and more gross-conscious soul to identify itself with higher and higher types of finite gross forms evolved by the impressions of the last lower finite gross form.

Similarly, the evolution of the finite mental form of the soul also takes place simultaneously to accommodate, retain and reflect the increasingly innumerable, varied impressions gained and gathered by the evolution of greater and greater consciousness of the soul.

Thus it is that, when the soul tends to identify itself with varied species of vegetable-forms, the evolved finite subtle form and the evolved finite mental form of the soul begin to show greater and visible signs of the soul's association with its much evolved finite subtle form and finite mental form in the shape of varied, rapid cycles of changes taking place in vegetable-forms; and also, in the shape of vegetable-forms showing first signs of peculiar, varied and meaningful tendencies of self-preservation and survival of the fittest.

In the worm-, bird- and fish-forms, this tendency of the finite mental form of the soul is translated gradually and steadily into the shape of instinct, until in the animal-form this instinct is fully manifested as one of the finite aspects of the finite mental form of the soul. Gradually this instinct is further and completely transformed into intellect, this being the highest finite aspect of manifestation of the mental form in the human-form of the gross-conscious human soul experiencing the gross world.

So it is that only in human-form are the subtle body and the mental body fully developed, wherefore the soul, associating itself consciously with human-form is, so to speak, fully equipped with a human body, subtle body and mental body, together with full consciousness of the gross.

Although the soul has gained consciousness in human-form and thus experiences the gross world, yet the gross-conscious human soul is unconscious of the subtle body and so cannot experience the subtle world. It is also unconscious of the mental body and thus cannot experience the mental world.

Even though the soul has only gross consciousness and is unconscious of the subtle and mental, it does work through the subtle and mental bodies, although indirectly, on the gross plane. Even though the gross-conscious human soul is unconscious of its subtle and mental bodies and their respective subtle and mental worlds, and therefore does not realize the energy of the subtle and the mind of the mental, yet it can **use** energy through various gross aspects of energy such as nuclear energy. And it can **use** mind through various gross aspects of mind such as desires, emotions and thoughts. Of these, **desires** are the predominant aspect of the mind.

So this soul, now fully gross-conscious of the first-most human gross form and still unconscious of the subtle and mental, experiences in the gross world the impressions of the last-most animal gross form dissociated or dropped.

When all the impressions of the last-most animal gross form are exhausted, it is but natural that the first-most human gross form is dissociated from the soul. This experience of the soul is universally termed the death of the human being.

As explained previously, although this soul is dissociated from the first-most human gross form, it is **never** dissociated from its subtle or its mental forms or bodies.

It was also previously explained that though this soul is dissociated from its first-most human gross form, the soul retains and experiences through the subtle and mental bodies the impressions of the dropped or dissociated first-most human-form, and the soul again associates itself with the next-most human-form to experience the impressions of the previous human-form dropped. In fact, the next-most human-form is nothing but the consolidated mould of the past impressions retained of the previous body or form that dissociated from the soul. Thus the association of the soul with the next-most human-form is called universally the birth of a human being.

The apparent gap between the death and the birth of a human being is that period in which the gross-conscious soul, in its association with its fully developed subtle and mental bodies, has experiences of the predominant counterpart of the opposite impressions

gathered by the recently dissociated human-form. This state of the soul, in the apparent gap between death and birth, is generally called hell or heaven, and this process of intermittent association and dissociation of consciousness of the conscious soul in human-form, now fully conscious, is termed the "Reincarnation Process."

If the predominant counterpart of the impressions of opposites (such as virtue and vice, good and evil, male and female, etc.), as experienced by the soul now associated only with the subtle and mental, is of virtue or goodness (*i.e.*, the positive aspect of the opposite impressions), then the soul is said to be in heaven. If it is of vice or evil (*i.e.*, the negative aspect of opposite impressions), then the soul is said to be in hell.

The states of heaven and hell are nothing but states of intensive experiences of the consciousness of the soul, experiencing either of the predominant counterparts of the opposite impressions while the soul is dissociated from the gross human body or form. The soul itself does not go to heaven or hell, as is the general belief, because it is eternally infinite and eternally in the Over-Soul. It is the consciousness of the soul which experiences the impressions.

As soon as the predominant counterpart of impressions is experienced and exhausted, and just when equilibrium is about to be maintained between the opposites of impressions of the last human-form that was dropped, at this juncture the soul automatically associates with the next-most human-form, moulded of the consolidated impressions of opposites which were about to be in a state of equilibrium.

Thus the gross consciousness of the soul, after experiencing either hell or heaven, associates with the next human-form (takes another birth) to experience and exhaust the residual opposite impressions of the last birth. As has already been said, this next human-form of the soul is nothing but the consolidated mould of the residual opposite impressions of the last form.

It is in this manner that an apparently unending chain of births and deaths of human-forms or beings continues to form and dwindle. This is the course of reincarnation in human forms of the soul, after it has gained full gross consciousness through the whole series of evolution of the gross consciousness. Right from the unconscious