

the function of digestion and the function of intellectual labour. It is this discord which is the cause why men who do much exercise their brains are so frequently found dyspeptic.

It is worthy of remark in this place that as a rule persons who do much brain-work take a less quantity of food than others.

I hope that my readers will think a little upon this subject of the rhythm of respiration so that they may apprehend the pertinency of what the Yoga prescribes with respect to regulating the rhythm of respiration.

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Bankipore, the 17th October, 1882.

KARMA.

1. We start with the supposition that the *Karma* (or merit) theory is admitted, and that it explains all the multifarious differences found between man and man, as to the particular world he is born in, the locality where he takes birth, his nationality, color, creed, status in society, status in prosperity and physical, intellectual and moral attainments, with their consequences and goal. I might dilate upon this point to any length, but what follows does not require it; only that I wish parenthetically to observe here that, when we hear others saying "my fate," "my destiny," and "my luck," these are synonymous with my *Karma*.

2. The question next suggesting itself is what is the sphere of "Karma,"—I am, what I am—the effect of my actions in my previous birth, and whatever I do I am made to do by my "Karma," every word that I utter, every act that I perform, and every thought that my mind thinks? My "Karma" is my leading string, and I am incapable, therefore, of doing anything *independent* of the "Karma" which rules me as a despot, or as expressed in Sanscrit, *I am Karmadhīnam*. Thus, *All that I am* has for its cause, my *Pūrvajanna Karma*; and, following the reasoning in my previous birth, I must have been as blind a slave of *its* previous Karma; and, this carried *ad infinitum* we are finally (suppose a *finality* for an instant) forced to admit that Karma existed *before* what is now called "I."* The primal Karmas, then, of two different individuals, say a mahārāja and a scavenger, must have been two (quite) different kinds, and there must have been as many innumerable different kinds of Karmas as there are kinds among men. I will not for the present go into the question of the Karma of animals, vegetables, and inert matter, for I should have to sail on a shoreless ocean without rudder or compass. If so, what is the origin of Karma, how came the numberless species, and how came the retailing of the "I's" (or *Egos*) under the banners of each of these species? To answer at least the last of these points, "viz." the reason for the classification of "I's" under separate Karma leaders, I am obliged to introduce a dilemma, and we might choose either of its two horns. It is, that in order that an "Ego" should get into the clutches of a particular primal Karma, the "Ego" must previously have been the *cause* of Karma, which in turn became the "Ego's" master; and, therefore, that "Ego" must have existed *previous* to to any Karma. It was just stated that *Karma* preceded *Ego*, and was holding "Ego" in subjection ever since *eternity* (the same as *finality*). Hence, the refreshing conclusion that this subject is a "puzzle." Let us, however, restrict the domain of Karma's sphere, and allow "Ego" some more privilege. I shall now state the case thus:—It is true that "what I am" is produced by my previous Karma, not however to the extent that the power for the "Ego" to assert itself again is

* We admit nothing of the kind, for it would be very unphilosophical.—Ed,

altogether annihilated. "I am" the effect of my previous Karma, and still there is in me so much of the *Ego* left, which can act independently for itself, and accumulate by its acts all the causes that will produce effect at my next birth; and, with that birth and a few other manifestations until the end of that next birth, all the rest is left for the *Ego* to do, which is, therefore, not included in the "effect total" of my *Pūrvajanna Karma*. I hope I have expressed myself clearly, notwithstanding unavoidable repetitions; and, I add, that the question whether "Karma" or "Ego" was original is similar to whether the bird or the egg, the seed or the plant or yet spirit or matter came first? (N. B.—the last simile should be understood in this way:—It may be maintained "Spirit" breathed Matter and created it by its "WILL," or it may be extended that the essence or the necessary result of a particular combination—mechanical, chemical, magnetic—of Matter is "Spirit.") At this stage we will, then, suppose them as co-existent, and subordinate one to the other. Can we say that this subordination, now of this, now of the other, is all produced by chance? Then all we see around us in rest also be chance too;—the motions of the sun, and planets; the fixed stars; and nature's Laws!! But these are regular and unvarying; so are "Karma" and "I." The next question arises: assuming of course that "Ego" is the primal originator of Karma, what makes the "Ego" create that particular Karma rather than any other? Why should my first Ego produce a Karma that will entitle it to become a scavenger at its next birth rather than a maharajah? There is the problem. Will you or any of your correspondents lift it for me? If anything would induce me to become a Theosophist it is that you seem to hold the keys to certain mysteries into which I may be led, if only proper conditions are fulfilled.

3. In this connection, I would ask, as one of your contributors has already done, (1) why should have "Spirit" got itself entangled with gross matter, and subject itself to endless suffering? (2) Why should it undergo the many trials that are attributed to the very circumstance of the entanglement, and laid at the door of "matter" which originated out of "Spirit" and is subordinate to it? (3) It is held that "bad" men gradually lose their spirituality, and become more and more grossly materialized, until the "Spirit" is "annihilated"! Has matter, then, such a power over "Spirit"? We are for the present forced to lose sight of the fact (!) that "Spirit" breathed out matter, which (latter) is passively acted upon by the former. Here is another side of the puzzle.

4. In the same strain we might discuss the questions concerning "God" and "Satan," and we might thus enter into another and vaster field of doubt, and must and could see the absurdities of the Religions which proclaim the doctrines of "Hell" and "Heaven." But my present subject is simply "Karma," and, therefore I close after inviting once more the attention of your readers and all those interested in such subjects to an article, "Bad and Good" published in the *Madras Philosophic Inquirer*.

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Camp Tiptur, Mysore Province, Sept. 1882.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—We fear our correspondent is labouring under various misconceptions. We will not touch upon his very original views of Karma—at its incipient stage—since his ideas are his own, and he is as much entitled to them as any one else. But we will briefly answer his numbered questions at the close of the letter.

1. Spirit got itself entangled with gross matter for the same reason that *life* gets entangled with the *fœtus* matter. It followed a law, and therefore could not help the entanglement to occur.

2. We know of no eastern philosophy that teaches that "matter" originated out of Spirit." Matter is as eternal and indestructible as Spirit and one cannot be made cognizant to our senses without the other—even to our, the highest, spiritual sense. Spirit *per se* is a *non-entirety* and *non-existence*. It is the *negation* of every affirmation and of all that is.