KARMA

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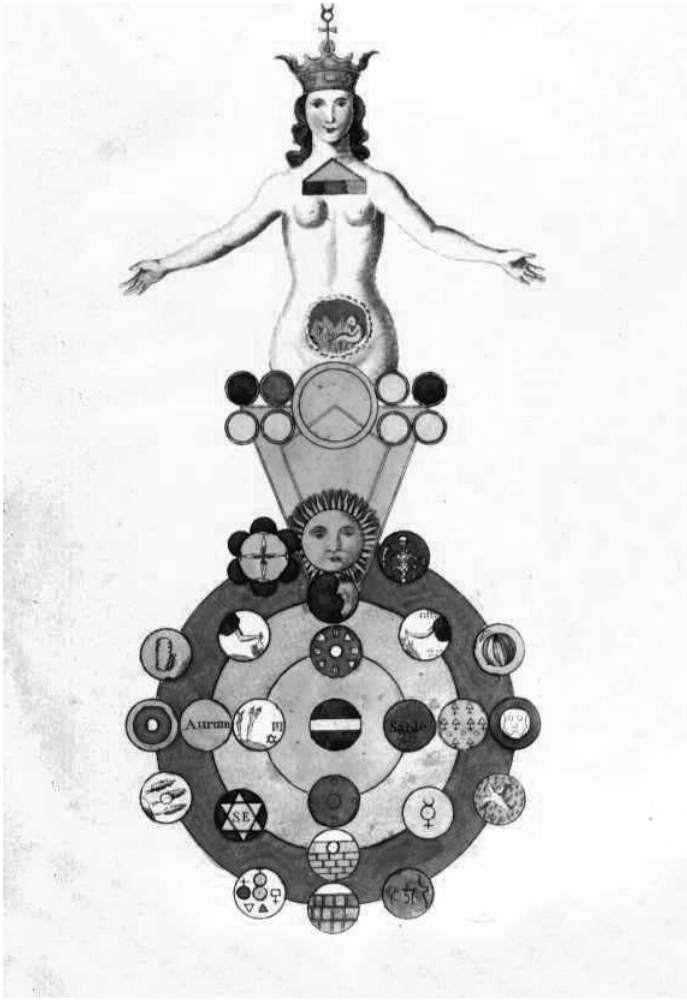
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PREFACE

Few words are needed in sending this little book out into the world. It is the fourth of a series of Manuals designed to meet the public demand for a simple exposition of Theosophical teachings. Some have complained that our literature is at once too abstruse, too technical, and too expensive for the ordinary reader, and it is our hope that the present series may succeed in supplying what is a very real want. Theosophy is not only for the learned; it is for all. Perhaps among those who in these little books catch their first glimpse of its teachings, there may be a few who will be led by them to penetrate more deeply into its philosophy, its science and its religion, facing its abstruser problems with the student's zeal and the neophyte's ardour. But these manuals are not written for the eager student, whom no initial difficulties can daunt; they are written for the busy men and women of the work-a-day world, and seek to make plain some of the great truths that render life easier to bear and death easier to face. Written by servants of the Masters who are the Elder Brothers of our race, they can have no other object than to serve our fellow-men.



Cover Image: "*Symbol of the Universal Spirit of Nature"* (Ebenezer Sibly, 1751-1799)

KARMA.

*Every thought of man upon being evolved passes into the inner world, and becomes an active entity by associating itself, coalescing we might term it, with an elemental —that is to say, with one of the semi-intelligent forces of the kingdoms. It survives as an active intelligence—a creature of the mind's begetting—for a longer or shorter period proportionate with the original intensity of the cerebral action which generated it. Thus, a good thought is perpetuated as an active, beneficent power, an evil one as a maleficent demon. And so man is continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with the offspring of his fancies, desires, impulses and passions; a current which re-acts upon any sensitive or nervous organisation which comes in contact with it, in proportion to its dynamic intensity. The Buddhist calls it his "Skandha;" the Hindu gives it the name of "Karma." The Adept evolves these shapes consciously; other men throw them off unconsciously.**

* *The Occult World*, pp. 89, 90. Fourth Edition.

No more graphic picture of the essential nature of Karma has ever been given than in these words, taken from one of the early letters of Master K. H. If these are clearly understood, with all their implications, the perplexities which surround the subject will for the most part disappear, and the main principle underlying karmic action will be grasped. They will therefore be taken as indicating the best line of study, and we shall begin by considering the creative powers of man. All we need as preface is a clear conception of the invariability of law, and of the great planes in Nature.

The Invariability of Law.

That we live in a realm of law, that we are surrounded by laws that we cannot break, this is a truism. Yet when the fact is recognised in a real and vital way, and when it is seen to be a fact in the mental and moral world as much as in the physical, a certain sense of helplessness is apt to overpower us, as though we felt ourselves in the grip of some mighty Power, that, seizing us, whirls us away whither it will. The very reverse of this is in reality the case, for the mighty Power, when it is understood, will obediently carry us whither *we* will; all forces in Nature can be used in proportion as they are understood—"Nature is conquered by obedience" —and her resistless energies are at our bidding as soon as we, by knowledge, work with them and not

against them. We can choose out of her boundless stores the forces that serve our purpose in momentum, in direction, and so on, and their very invariability becomes the guarantee of our success.

On the invariability of law depend the security of scientific experiment, and all power of planning a result and of predicting the future. On this the chemist rests, sure that Nature will ever respond in the same way, if he be precise in putting his questions. A variation in his results is taken by him as implying a change in his procedure, not a change in Nature. And so with all human action; the more it is based on knowledge, the more secure is it in its forecastings, for all "accident" is the result of ignorance, and is due to the working of laws whose presence was unknown or overlooked. In the mental and moral worlds, as much as in the physical, results can be foreseen, planned for, calculated on. Nature never betrays us; we are betrayed by our own blindness. In all worlds increasing knowledge means increasing power, and omniscience and omnipotence are one.

That law should be as invariable in the mental and moral worlds as in the physical is to be expected, since the universe is the emanation of the ONE, and what we call Law is but the expression of the Divine Nature. As there is one Life emanating all, so there is one Law sustaining all; the worlds rest on this rock of the Divine Nature as on a secure, immutable foundation.

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The Planes of Nature.

To study the workings of Karma on the line suggested by the Master, we must gain a clear conception of the three lower planes, or regions, of the universe, and of the Principles* related to them. The names given to them indicate the state of the consciousness working on them. In this a diagram may help us, showing the planes with the Principles related to them, and the vehicles in which a conscious entity may visit them. In practical Occultism the student learns to visit these planes, and by his own investigations to transform theory into knowledge. The lowest vehicle, the Gross Body, serves the consciousness for its work on the physical plane, and in this the consciousness is limited within the capacities of the brain. The term Subtle Body covers a variety of astral bodies, respectively suitable to the varying conditions of the very complicated region indicated by the name psychic plane. On the devachanic plane there are two well-defined levels, the Form Level and the Formless Level; on the lower, consciousness uses an artificial body, the Mâyâvi Rûpa, but the term Mind Body seems suitable as indicating that the matter of which it is composed belongs to the plane of Manas. On the formless level the Causal Body must be used. Of the Buddhic plane it is needless to speak.

* See, for these, Manual I.