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EVOLUTION OF LIFE AND FORM

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Besant A.

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Содержание

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[FIRST LECTURE.] ANCIENT AND MODERN SCIENCE

My Brothers: – The subject on which I am to address you this morning, and the three mornings that follow, is one of considerable complexity and difficulty. I do not apologise to you for the difficulty of my theme. When we meet here in our Anniversary Meeting, we meet as students and not simply as superficial men and women of the world. We try to prepare ourselves, by study, for the exchange of thought which in these gatherings takes place, and although the subject is a difficult one, although it is not possible to make it clear and intelligible without the use of certain technical terms, yet, to the student technical terms – being precise – are really the easiest to understand, and inasmuch as, in a great majority at least, we are students, I who speak, and you who listen, we may be content to treat the subject in a somewhat formal and technical way. Roughly, my outline is this. I want to lay before you an intelligible conception of evolution, taking it on its two sides, that of the evolving life and that of the developing forms. I begin by laying before you a sketch of the methods of "Ancient and Modern Science," the direction in which each has worked, and is working, the ultimate union that, we hope, may take place between them. For what could more fully presage the good of the whole world, what could promise more happily for the relationship between the different races of humanity, than to draw together on the plane of mind the science of antiquity and of modern days, the science of the East and of the West, and, by wedding them to each other, draw together the nations that are now divided, and make objective that brotherhood of humanity of which we dream.

Dealing first with ancient and modern science in this broad and general way, and taking that as my subject for this morning, I shall pass on to-morrow to speak on the "Functions of the Gods," meaning by that phrase the activities of that invisible side of nature on which the whole of the visible depends. Whether we use here the name "Devas" to represent those developed spiritual intelligences, or whether with the child of Islâm, with the Hebrew or the Christian, we speak of the "Angels" and "Archangels," the name matters nothing; the conception is common to every faith of man. We shall study their functions in the universe, and try to understand how they act as the ministers of the Divine Will. Then we shall pass on to treat of that "Evolution of Life" which lies underneath the evolution of forms. Finally, we shall treat the "Evolution of Forms," and see how, in that evolution, is the promise of final perfection, how all is working to a perfect ending, how the best that we can dream of is less than the performance of God.

That is the outline of our work. Let us at once begin the first section of the subject – Ancient and Modern Science.

Now, in the olden times, in those times to which in this land our thought turns back most fondly with reverence and with pride, in those times, here, as in every other ancient land, Religion and Science were wedded together, and there was no discord between the intelligence and the spirit. It matters not whither you wander amid the ancient nations of the world: you may travel through the whole of Chaldea; you may study the remains of ancient Egypt; you may go through Persia and

search amid her monuments; you may cross the Atlantic to America, and unbury the cities that were lost ere yet the Aztecs had made the mighty State which fell under the blows of the Spaniards; you may go into China and, in the vast recesses of that well-nigh unknown land, you may search for what has been left there from ancient days; or without going outside the limits of your own land, you may take the literature that is our pride, the mighty books written by the Ṛishis of the past; and everywhere antiquity speaks with a single tongue. Religion reveals the spirit, the spiritual truth which is one. Intelligence studies that truth in its manifold manifestations, and its work; science, studying the phenomena which are images of aspects of the Divine, is the handmaid, is the sister, of religion, and between them discord is unnatural and fatal to progress. That is the ancient view; but when we come to our own century a new phenomenon presents itself to our gaze – religion on the one side suspicious of science in its progress, science on the other hand apt to be proudly contemptuous of religious claims. How has the divorce arisen? Why this discord between two of the great helpers of human evolution? The reason is not far to seek. In the western world the science of the elder time, the science of antiquity, disappeared in the great flood of barbaric invasions, underneath the whirlpool caused by the ruins of the Roman Empire, and later on, underneath the wreckage of that same Empire with its new centre in Constantinople. The invasions of barbarians, both from the East and the North, sweeping over the European continent, brought ignorance in the wake of barbaric conquest. The result was that night came down upon knowledge and thick darkness enveloped the lands which were to be the nursery of a new civilisation. When the Sun of science again began to rise upon the Western world, it presented itself in a form which was alien, nay, which was more than alien, which was hostile to the dominant religion of the time. It came from the children of Islâm. It came from those who recognised Muhammed as their Prophet. From the Muslim schools of Arabia came the first teachers of modern science to Europe. True, they were really by their intellectual ancestry descended from the thought of Greece. They drew their inspiration from the school of Plato through the Neo-Platonists; they reproduced the ideas of Porphyry and Ptolemy, and of other Grecian and Egyptian thinkers, Neo-Platonic and even Gnostic. But they threw over it the garb of Islâm, they presented it in the form of Arabic thought. The result of this was that, as it made its way into Spain in the wake of the conquering Moors, as it came with those who drove out of the Southern Peninsula the rule of the Spanish Christian monarchy, so the first aspect of science to Christians was an aspect of hostility. It came as an invading enemy and not as an illuminant to all. Hence conflict arose; some who were within the limits of the mighty Church of Rome, touched by a longing for the new learning, stretched out their hands to take the gifts that science was bringing. These men were regarded with suspicion, nay, with more than suspicion, with hatred that broke out in bitter persecution. Who can read the history of Roger Bacon, the wondrous monk; who can picture Copernicus on his death-bed as his immortal work is brought to him ere yet his eyes are closed, he having shrunk from earlier publication, lest the stake should be his portion; who can stand in the Field of Flowers in Rome, and see there the statue erected where he was burned to death, who dying in one century, lives for all centuries to come – Giordano Bruno; who can listen to Galileo, as with faltering lips he denies the truth he knows and utters the falsehood that he knows not; who can follow these martyr-steps, led on by bitter memories of blood and fire, without understanding the reason for the hostility of science to religion, without confessing with shame and sorrow that that hostility was caused and was justified by the cruelties wreaked by religion on science, when science was young and feeble? Every one of us who stands upon the side of religion should recognise that we are reaping the bitter harvest of our own past errors, and that the law is just which brings upon us the difficulties and opposition we encounter in our modern days. For as science grew strong, she grew strong with the sword in her hands. She fought for every inch of the ground on which she stood, and only so far as she could guard herself was she safe from the flame or from the prison. Hence she searched for everything in nature that could serve as a weapon against the foe that attacked her. Hence she welcomed eagerly everything which seemed to show that materialism was the true philosophy of life. If we go back twenty-five

years, to the time when I and some of you were young, we shall find that over western science there hung the shadow of materialism, and that stronger and stronger grew the scientific tendency to "see in matter the promise and the potency of every form of life." You remember those famous words of Professor Tyndall, no materialist in his thought and a religious man in his aspirations, but wellnigh driven by despair to claim fair field for science, and to fling back the claims of religion, because among them was included the right to gag, the refusal to allow thought to be honestly uttered by the thinker. But things are changing more and more; as religion has been growing more liberal and more rational, science is becoming less materialistic and less aggressive; and we shall see presently that the most modern of modern science – not quite the science that you get in your textbooks, for that is practically out-of-date in the rush of thought which comes from the West, but the science of the leaders of thought, the science of the first men in the scientific camp – is more and more approaching the domain where scientists will recognise religion as helper and not as enemy. In fact, speaking from the same chair from which Tyndall had uttered his famous phrase that "in matter he saw the promise and potency of every form of life," his successor, Sir William Crookes, a member of our own Theosophical Society, declared, reversing those words of his predecessor, that "In life I see the promise and potency of all forms of matter."

Such is the great change. Let us now examine in detail. The fundamental difference between ancient and modern science is that ancient science studies the world from the standpoint of life which is evolving, while modern science studies the world by observing the forms through which that life is manifesting. The first studies life, and sees in forms the expressions of life. The second studies forms, and tries, by the process of induction, to find out if there be an underlying principle by which the multiplicity of forms may be explained. The first works from above downwards, the second from below upwards, and in that very fact is the promise of a meeting place where the two will join hand in hand. But this fundamental difference carries with it very important results. If we are to study the world from the standpoint of forms, our study will be almost endless in its multiplicity. Think of a tree; the one trunk through which the life is pouring, innumerable leaves in which that life is ultimately expressed; it is an image of the tree of life, that great Ashvattha, the tree of which we have heard, whose roots are in the heavens and whose branches spread out over the earth. If we are to study it where its trunk is, the trunk of life, we have the unity of purpose and can trace why we have multiplicity of forms; but if we are to start at the parts where the leaves are growing, leaf by leaf we must examine, every difference of outline we must record, each little variety in shape we must carefully note and study. Science studies the leaves in modern days – the old science studied the life. There is the fundamental difference. There is also the reason of the difference of methods by which the study must be carried on. What is the method of modern science? The use of clear observation, keen judgment, power of placing like things together, and seeing the differences that divide the classes of the like from the classes of the unlike. But in order that this may be done, inasmuch as nature is infinite both in the vast and in the minute, man demands, to supplement his limited senses, instruments and apparatus of the most exquisite and delicate character; so that it has been even said that the progress of science is the progress of the exquisite nature of the apparatus which science uses, and scientific men will devise a more delicate balance, a more dainty way of adjustment, instrument after instrument, until perfection seems well-nigh to be reached; the modern man of science, to carry on his researches, demands a vast array of apparatus that he must use for his work, for according to the delicacy of his apparatus is the extent of his observation of the forms to which his attention is directed. But the man of science of the ancient type does not ask for instruments; he is not studying the evolution of forms; he has to study life, not form; and for such study he must evolve himself, the life that is within him, for only life can measure life, only life can respond to the vibrations of the living; his work is to unfold himself, to bring out of the depths of his own nature the divine powers that lie hidden therein, not in the senses but in the Self. His investigations can only be carried on by means of these powers, and only as he develops the divine within him will he be able

to understand and measure the divine without him. Now this is only possible because, in essence, the natures of God and man are identical. This sounds a bold statement, but it is the fundamental truth of all religions. Need I quote to you the famous saying, "Thou art That"? Shall I take an equivalent phrase from the Hebrew Scripture, accepted by the whole Christian world: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him"? The teaching is identical as all great truths are identical in the various religions; but what does it mean? God is manifest in His universe. Would you understand His work, you must develop the God within yourself, else will He for ever be veiled from your eyes. Not by the eyes of sense may you behold Him, not by the vision of intellect may you see that Form, invisible even to the intelligence. Only as the Self that is God is unfolded within you, will the Self that is the God without you manifest to you the full glory of His life. That is the ancient starting point. Thus what the man of old had to do, if indeed he were to be a man of science, was to become divine; he was to be a saint before he could be a sage. No man could be wise until he was pure, for how should impure eyes behold the Pure? There is the hall-mark of the man of science of the ancient days: he is developed within before he can be learned without. But from the modern man of science is not demanded this condition. He must indeed lead a life that is self-restrained, orderly, and fairly clean; were he to yield to the riot of the senses, his intelligence would become clouded. He must have keen power of observation, balanced strength of judgment, strong patience, unwearied industry, clear insight for differences and similarities. All these are demanded from him, if he is to be great, and these are among the noblest powers of intelligence. But all he asks of religion is to leave him alone. Of old, religion opened the gateway to science; now-a-days science asks nothing from religion save to stand aside. That is the difficulty in our way. We have to show that life cannot be understood until the student lives that which he seeks. That even the understanding of forms is very imperfect until the life expressed through them is recognised and partially understood. That fundamental difference of method then, will cover the whole field, and will enable us to comprehend the difference of the results.

Now let us try to understand more clearly why it was that the ancient man of science was taught that the first step to true knowledge, or wisdom, was the unfolding of the Self. What is life or consciousness – for the two terms are synonymous? It is the power to answer to vibrations, the power to respond – that is consciousness. Evolution is the unfolding of a continually increasing power to respond. The whole universe is full of the vibrations of Íshvara, of God. He sustains and moves the whole. Consciousness is the power in us to answer to those vibrations. All powers lie hidden within us as the oak tree lies hidden in the acorn. But it is in the process of evolution that the sapling slowly grows out of the seed. In Eternity, in the Now, all is existent, perfect; in Time only is there succession, the unfolding of one thing after another. In the changeless Point everything is present: Space is but the field for diverse sequences. Hence Time and Space are the basic illusions, and are yet the fundamental conditions of thinking. Keep, I pray you, that definition of consciousness in mind, for it will govern the remainder of our study.

The Self in man, being in the image of God, is triple as the Self, the Divine, is triple. I need not stop to argue this. You know it from that great literature which lies at the foundation of all Hindu Philosophy. Whether you speak in abstract terms and say with the Upanishad that Brahman is threefold, whether you speak of Him as Sat-chit-ânanda, or whether, instead of using philosophical, abstract terms, you say He is manifest as Íshvara in the Trimûrti as Mahâdeva, Vishnu and Brahmâ, it matters not. You may take the concrete form or the abstract, the fundamental idea is the same: that the Divine Self in manifestation is triple, and therefore in every great religion God is spoken of as a Trinity. If this were not so, the relationship between God and man would remain for ever unintelligible, for man shows a triplicity as he evolves. The human reflection of that triple Divine Self is the triple Self in man.

One by one are the Divine aspects unfolded as manifestation proceeds. The lowest, if I may dare to use such a term, is the aspect which is first brought into activity for the building of the universe. So

also in man the intelligence awakens and becomes active, the lowest aspect of the human Self. That is the reflection of Brahmâ, of the Universal Mind, the creative energy from which all comes forth; and you may find in yourselves, as you evolve, that creative faculty of imagination which, working at present in subtle matter, will, when man is perfect, work in grosser matter as well; for the imaginative power in man is the reflection of the power that in God created the universe. Brahmâ meditated, and all forms came forth; and in the creative power of mind lies every possibility of form. So in man is later evolved the next aspect, that of A'nanda, where unity is recognised instead of diversity. Chit, in man, is the intelligence that *knows*, that separates and divides and analyses, and it has to do with the multiplicity of forms and with their inter-relations; A'nanda is the wisdom that realises the unity of all things, and that accomplishes union, thus finding the joy that lies at the very heart of life; last of all in human evolution, is developed the third and highest aspect of Deity, Self-Existence, the Unity that lies beyond union, and this can be developed in man only because man is one with the Eternal in his nature. By this evolution, in ages to come, through the countless kalpas that lie in front, Íshvara after Íshvara arises, each as the fruitage of a universe, to carry on still more mightily the will of the "One without a second," and to manifest something of that perfection to the whole of the then manifested nature. Such, very roughly, is the course of human evolution into divinity, and this is carried on by races succeeding one another; as we come to the higher Root-races of man, to those that we speak of as the Fifth, in which we are, the Sixth, that shall succeed us, and the Seventh that finishes this cycle of human evolution, we learn that the characteristic of each of these three Root-races is that each gradually develops that aspect of God which belongs to it in the due sequence of evolution. The Fifth is developing the aspect of Chit, Intelligence, the mind is being evolved, and all the progress of modern science, so marked in our own days, is but part of the fruitage of that evolution, of that growth of intelligence which looks on the outer world as not itself – as the Not-Self – and seeks to study and understand it. The characteristic attributes belonging to the evolution of the two following races are even now to be reached by special methods, by individuals who are willing to take the pains to make the required sacrifices. That which we know as Yoga is the method by which evolution is quickened in the individual, and all the powers of the Self, up to the threshold of divinity, may by it be brought into manifestation in the man of the present. That is why Yoga training was necessary for the ancient scientist; he must develop in himself the three aspects of God, if he were to understand them as manifested in the universe around him.

Now, at our own stage of evolution, it is specially the life of Brahmâ – or the Brahmâ aspect of God – with which the human mind is coming into touch, because the mind in man is the reflection of the universal mind in Kosmos. That life is the life that is the force in the atom, that vivifies every atom, nay, that brings the atom into existence, as we shall see, and remains during the whole of the growth of the universe as the fundamental life that keeps those atoms as active particles building up innumerable forms. Only as the life of Brahmâ, the aspect of Brahmâ, is developed in the human Self will man be able to study the workings of that life in the atomic forms that are filled by it; and it is very significant that some of the greatest problems of modern science are now turning on the nature of the atom, and that scientists are asking, what is it? Is it matter or force? Is it a particle or a vortex? Never will that question be answered with certainty until man has developed in himself the power to respond to the life that thrills in the atom, until, developing intelligence within himself to the fullest point, he is able to answer by that intelligence to the vibrations of the atomic life outside him. We have defined consciousness as the power to answer to vibrations, and if man is to measure life, if he is to know the underlying causes of phenomena, he must develop in himself the power to respond to that life outside him; and in the perfection of human intelligence – the reflection of the Brahmâ aspect of God – lies the only possibility of solution for this much debated problem in science. I said it was significant, for this problem belongs to the Fifth race, and the Western world is at present peopled largely by the fifth sub-race of the great Fifth. Thus it takes to the very highest point the concrete mind of man, that marvellous activity of the intellect, that swift and yet patient study, bringing about

the achievements that modern science is performing. All these are a testimony of the truth of the ancient teaching that sub-race after sub-race arises, each one with its own work to do, and we should look on the work of each sub-division of humanity as good in itself: each should not be regarded as an isolated and hostile expression, but as part of the Divine manifestation, expressing that portion which it is destined to express.

Looking thus, then, on the problem of the life that exists in the atom, we find that in order to understand it, we must develop the pure intellect in man; but to understand the life that clothes itself in organic forms, to unravel the secrets which will explain to us why one is formed thus and another thus, the next great aspect of the Self must be developed within us – that of the all-pervading life of Vishnu, that sustains the world as the mighty supporter of everything, the basis, the foundation of the whole. There alone is unifying energy and there the root from which all divisions have arisen; only as we realise this aspect of unifying energy in the Self will the secrets of organised forms in nature unravel themselves before our eyes. This work is that of the Sixth Root-race, and those who would ante-date their evolution must develop Sixth-race powers in themselves by Yoga. Remains one mightier problem, subtlest and most difficult of all, that of the life of the human spirit, of man evolving into God. The mysteries of that life may only be understood when the human Self, which comes forth from the Father of all – from the mighty One who is sometimes the Destroyer, sometimes the Creator, but always the Regenerator, the name that includes them both, Mahâdeva, the mighty God who is Sat, Existence – has developed the aspect of Sat, of pure Existence, thus becoming the triple Unity, a Logos, an Íshvara. That is the work of the Seventh Root-race, and when that is accomplished, then only will the final problems of the human spirit lie open before our gaze.

The scientific man of antiquity, then, began by that self-attention, unfolding in himself one by one all those potentialities under a suitable Guru, passing from step to step till he reached the highest, and ever worshipping the Mahâguru, the Guru of the universe. Having unfolded his highest powers, he began to study life, life in its outpouring, not life in its manifold and veiled manifestations in the lower worlds. Hence the lofty point at which he started, no less than the arising of Íshvara enveloped in Mâyâ.

What is Íshvara? What is Mâyâ? There is the first great problem. Let us reverently address ourselves to it. The philosophers of India have answered these questions in different ways, each one containing part of the eternal truth. Íshvara is that mighty centre of consciousness that exists unchanged in the bosom of the One Existence. There are innumerable such Centres of Consciousness, of which you may remember your own Svâmi Subba Rao wrote as existing in the bosom of the One Existence. Íshvara in manifestation is like a lamp, a light enclosed in a shade. Íshvara, enveloped in Mâyâ, brings forth a universe and is enclosed, as it were, in the universe of which He is the Light. Breaking the shade, the light shines forth in every direction. Dissolving the universe, He still remains. The centre remains, but the circumference that circumscribed it is gone. So is that mighty centre when the universe vanishes; He alone remains, holding His centre unshaken in the very act of merging in, expanding into, the Infinite, the Absolute, the Super-Consciousness, the One. Let us think of Him as an eternal centre of self-consciousness, able to merge in super-consciousness and to again limit Himself to self-consciousness.

What, then, is Mâyâ? Mâyâ is prepared in every case by the merging in Íshvara of the whole of the universe which is come to its ending. As one loka rolls up and merges in the one above it, all forms in the loka thus merged disappear, but the consciousness that ensouled those forms does not vanish; a modification of consciousness remains, a modification expressing itself by a vibratory power – not a vibration, but a power to vibrate in a particular way; and though the form vanishes as the loka is merged in the one above it – because the matter disappears, being disintegrated into finer matter – in consciousness there remains the power to vibrate in the way in which it had vibrated in the grosser matter, and power persists although the forms caused by such vibrations disappear, for lack of material sufficiently coarse to respond to such vibrations. As one region passes into the next,

this process is repeated over and over and over again, and loka after loka vanishes. The forms are gone, the vibrations are gone, only the modifications in consciousness capable of giving rise to similar vibrations remain until finally, when Íshvara – whose consciousness was the one consciousness in the universe, whose life was the one life, who supported every form, who made the possibility of every separated existence – gathers up His universe into Himself ere He merges Himself in the One, everything has vanished that we know as form, nothing remains save the centre of consciousness. There remains in Íshvara the power of vibrating in particular fashions, resulting from the evolution of His universe, in endless multiplicity of vibrations; when He merges Himself in the One Existence all has vanished as form, but powers remain in these subtle modifications, preserved in that unchangeable centre in the mightiness of the One Life. Is that only a dream?

There was a great teacher, Vâsiṣhtha. He taught Râmâ, as you will remember, and in the record of his teaching there are hints on some of the mysteries of life. If you keep what I have now said in mind, if I have succeeded by the clumsy words which are all that the human tongue can utter on these great problems, in clarifying at all your thoughts, then just listen to that same thought as expressed by Sûryadeva, when he was speaking of the same thing – the ending and the new beginning of a universe. We have only to add to what I have already said, that when Íshvara arises in order that a new universe may be formed, He throws His life into these modifications that had apparently disappeared, and the Mâyâ in which He arises, enveloped and circumscribed, is His own re-vivified memory, which can never be separated from Himself; He draws in His consciousness, under the impulse of the Great Breath, limiting it to self-consciousness, and turning His attention to the contents of that self-consciousness, its powers start into activity, and that is Mâyâ. So it is written: "Thereafter, Thou, O Lord, intent on [maintaining] the reign of night, fixed within the Self, having indrawn that order of things, [or universe.]… To-day, Thou hast awakened, and art most joyfully desirous of again throwing out [manifesting] the universe in mighty gradations [hierarchies of beings]." [*Yoga Vâsiṣhtha*, lxxxvii, 7, 8.] These nights and days are the "Nights and Days of Brahmâ," the inbreathing and outbreathing of the One Existence, and Mâyâ is this indrawn "order of things" that remains fixed through the Night, and starts forth as Íshvara awakens at the coming of Day. That is Mâyâ and if you take up the definitions given in the different schools, you will find that this includes and illumines every one of them, that it shows you what is meant by illusion, and explains to you what is implied in dreaming. The joyful throwing out into manifestation of all the powers that are remembered by Íshvara the moment His attention is turned to His own Self, that memory-prompted "desire" which arises in the bosom of the Eternal, is the root of the coming universe. Now this thought will prove to you the key of much ancient teaching. You have, in the Universal Mind full of ideas which are not yet concreted into phenomena, the world of ideas of Plato, the invisible world of the Hebrew Kabbalah; in every great teaching you find the same thought expressed. If, instead of being fettered by words, as for the most part we are, and if, instead of repeating phrases that carry with them no idea in the mind of the repeater, we would try to read the thought that underlies the words, we should find the Hindu philosophy in every modern philosophy that is worthy of the name, and see the traces of ancient India in Greece and in Rome, in Germany and in the England of to-day.

What is the next stage? The Life-Breath goes forth. Íshvara, the Centre of all, enveloped in Mâyâ sends forth His breath; as that vibrating breath falls on the enveloping Mâyâ, Mâyâ becomes Prakriti, or Matter – rather, perhaps, Mûlaprakriti, the root of matter. As that breath, with its triple vibratory force falls on this matter, it throws it into three modifications, or "attributes" – Tamas, inertia, or better, stability; Rajas, activity, vigour; Sattva, a difficult word to translate: I am inclined to translate it as Harmony; for this reason, that wherever there is pleasure, Sattva is present. Without harmony no pleasure can anywhere exist. All pleasure is due to harmonious vibration, and that quality of harmonious inter-related vibrations is the quality that Sattva gives to matter. These three fundamental qualities of matter – answering to three fundamental modifications in the consciousness of Íshvara – inertia, activity, and harmony, these are the famous three Gunas without which Prakriti

cannot manifest. Fundamental, essential, and unchangeable, they are present in every particle in the manifested universe, and according to their combinations is the nature of each particle.

Then comes the seven-fold division. In a moment I will tell you why we speak of it as seven-fold instead of five-fold, which is the more familiar division to you. The seven-fold division, what is this? Here is matter with its three Gunas, now ready to receive another impulse from the Life-Breath; that breath comes forth from Brahmâ, for Íshvara has unfolded His triple nature into its three aspects, and it comes forth in seven great waves. Each one modifies matter, and evolves and ensouls those that follow it. The first two are absolutely beyond our knowing, and belong not to our present stages of evolution at all; therefore they are ordinarily left out, and only the five that make up the evolution of our universe are spoken of in the sacred books. Here and there the seven are mentioned, but only rarely. You may remember the seven tongues of fire, for instance, and one or two other similar phrases. But generally five-fold is Prâna, the five-fold evolving life. First, in every case, is a modification of consciousness sent forth as a power by Íshvara. Turn to the *Vishnu Purâna* and you will see exactly the stage that I am pointing out to you in more modern phrases. Íshvara Himself, as Brahmâ, sends forth a power, due to a modification of His consciousness, called in the *Vishnu Purâna* a Tanmâtra. In the English translation the word rudiment is used. You remember the rudiments of sound, of touch, of colour, and so on. All these rudiments are the tanmâtras. These tanmâtras are the powers due to modifications in consciousness or life, without which no modification in matter can be. The consciousness first, then the form. The first great vibration that goes forth is the vibration that gives rise to what we speak of here as sound – all our terms being drawn from the lowest, or physical, manifestations; the form that it brings into manifestation is A'kâsha, the mighty element of Ether; not the ether of modern science, of course, although that is its physical representative. Then into that the next tanmâtra, the next power due to a modification of consciousness, is sent forth; the A'kâsha, with the primary vibration within it, receives the second vibration sent out by Íshvara, and this, pervading the matter around it, brings about the next modification of matter, the element Vâyu, or Air. Vâyu, permeated, ensouled and enveloped in A'kâsha, receives a fresh impulse from Íshvara, the third tanmâtra, or power resulting from a modification of consciousness; this tanmâtra, working on Vâyu, produces the modification of matter called the element Agni, or Fire, and this fire-matter is permeated, ensouled, and enveloped in Vâyu, as Vâyu in A'kâsha. A similar process brings into manifestation the elements Apas and Prithivî. The "magnetic field" of an atom is composed of all the tanmâtras and elements above it. Try to realise this process if you can, though I know the conception is difficult. What has occurred? A modification of life or consciousness in Íshvara, manifested as a power, a vibration; everything depends on vibration; ancient and modern science speak alike on this. The universe is made up of vibrations, the vibrations which are the modifications of the Divine outpouring of life. These clothe themselves in fundamental forms of matter, out of which all multiplicity is developed. These modifications in matter, these great, or primary, elements are also called tattvas. Tanmâtras, then, are the powers sent out by modifications of consciousness, and these are awkwardly translated by the word rudiments; we have next the modifications in matter, the great elements, the primary elements, or tattvas. The first of the tattvas is called A'kâsha; then Vâyu, then Agni, then Apas, then Prithivî, the five following one after the other; the keynote of this evolution is that the modification of the previous higher tattva is reproduced within the lower, pervades it and expands outside it. If you will take the *Vishnu Purâna*, the second chapter, and read over again the evolution of the five tattvas, you will find that the Sanskrit word which is used comes from a root which means to pervade as well as to enclose, giving the idea of permeation as well as of expanding around to form an envelope. And you must understand that the central life of each tattva is the preceding tattva with its tanmâtra; that, with the new tanmâtra, makes up the life; and the outer form is the new tattva that by that productive action comes into existence.

Now leaving that, for I cannot go into further details, let me just say to you one word about the seven and the five, because that has been a source of great dispute between some of our Hindu Pandits

and some of our Theosophists. In the universe, taken as a whole, seven-fold is the life of Íshvara. Beyond the tattva that we know as A'kâsha, there is that tattva which has been called Anupâdaka, and beyond that A'ditattva, the first. Those are far beyond our knowing; we cannot think so far. For our life-evolution, the five mark the limit; and only the five, therefore, as a rule, are given in the books which are to be studied to show you how to evolve.

Rapidly we must pass onward, then, to these tattvas as, modifying themselves by aggregations, and by disintegrations and re-combinations of these, they make innumerable forms. The fundamental conception is that there are as many basic forms of atoms in the universe as there are tattvas. The tattva of ancient science is the atom of modern science, but modern science makes the mistake of supposing that there is only one fundamental atom. The truth is that modern science is only seeking to get hold of the Prithivî Tattva, the lowest, or physical, atom, and it has not yet recognized even the existence of the four (or six) higher atoms that stretch beyond. These atoms form the regions of the universe. All that is physical is made up from the Prithivî Tattva. Not only is this so, but within the limits of this physical region, correspondences of all the higher six atomic forms are reproduced. The sub-divisions of the physical region, due to combinations of the Prithivî Tattva, show forth the characteristics of the great regions which make up the universe; so that we have here in our solid, liquid, gas, three ethers and atoms, correspondences of the six higher tattvas, but we have them all in their Prithivî form; they are the modifications of Prithivî, reproducing on a lower plane the great primary elements. We might call them Prithivî A'ditattva, Prithivî Anupâdhakatattva, Prithivî A'kâshatattva, Prithivî Vâyutattva, Prithivî Agnitattva, Prithivî Apastattva, Prithivî Prithivîtattva. Above the region of Prithivî comes the great realm of Apas, with similar sub-divisions, all of the Apastattva, and so again another seven above that in the higher realm of Agni, and above that the same in the still higher realm of Vâyu, and above that again in the A'kâsha, and then the highest two unknown realms. When you remember that all these regions interpenetrate the one the other, you will gain some glimpse of a complexity dizzying to think of, the vast complexity of the universe in which the One Life is working. Yet that complexity is simplified by thus working downwards, and there is the line of the study of the ancient science. Working out from this originally simple life into the endless multiplicity of forms, we may trace the One among the many, and see the Self in all things, and all things in Him.

At the ending of a universe, the tattvas merge in each other by disintegration; Prithivî Tattva, having disintegrated into atoms, these atoms are themselves broken up, and the tanmâtra that formed them, being no longer able to express itself for lack of suitable material, ceases to be a power, and remains only represented by a modification in consciousness – a permanent possibility. Thus Apas Tattva becomes the lowest manifestation, and, by a repetition of the above process, ceases to exist. In like fashion each successively vanishes. Hence, Mahâdeva is represented as saying in the *Shivâgama*: "The universe proceeded from the tattvas; it goes on through the tattvas; it vanishes into the tattvas."

Such is the grandiose conception of the kosmos given by the science of antiquity; one life, pulsing into innumerable vibrations, and these throwing matter into forms. On this was based the Pythagorean system of numbers; on this mathematics and music were founded; on this the "Great Science," or Magic, of long-perished nations was built up. That science only survives in its purity in the Great White Brotherhood, but its traces may yet be seen in the scriptures and the religions of the world.

We take up modern science, and pass into a different atmosphere. Now phenomena are to be studied, forms are to occupy our attention. But as we look at modern science we find that it is beginning to transcend the study of forms; we find the efforts of its greatest men are turned to seek unity amid diversity. Do not think that, in speaking of modern science as studying forms, I am indifferent to the mighty achievements that it has made, or that I would say one word in derogation of the ability of the leading men of science, and the priceless value of the work that they are doing for humanity. Their achievements during the present century are achievements that are worthy of the very deepest respect, not only for the "sublime patience of the investigator," of which William

Kingdon Clifford so rightly spoke, but also for the self-abnegation with which many of them have given their lives to follow truth, to study in the innermost recesses of the phenomena of nature what secrets she has hidden, what may be underneath the "Veil of Isis." I do not, then, speak a word against modern science, but I point out to you this fact, that the greatest work of science has been the generalisations that have been suggested in the attempt to reach simplicity, to reduce multiplicity to unity. How far has science gone from that generally accepted view of the materialistic school of thirty years ago, that the universe is made up of an indefinite number of atoms, the atoms being our chemical elements! A phrase from one of the most famous of the then leading men of science, Dr. Ludwig Büchner, will mark the greatness of the change: he declared that the carbon atom will always remain a carbon atom, and has been a carbon atom from all eternity; that the hydrogen atom from all eternity has been a hydrogen atom, and to all eternity a hydrogen atom it will remain; for atoms with their properties are indestructible, and are therefore eternal. What man of science would dare to allege that to-day, knowing that he would be laughed to scorn by all his scientific brethren; who would say that these atoms are eternally of the same nature as they have till now been made out to be? What is science in fact, doing as to the atom? It is finding in what is called the atom a composite body, a compound, not an element. This discovery is chiefly due to the researches of Sir William Crookes, who is guided in his investigations by a deeper philosophy of the universe than is common among scientists. It is gradually finding out that these atoms are things that are built up gradually, and that the qualities of atoms are not fixed, but are properties that change with every difference of conditions. Late investigations have shown that when chemical bodies are submitted to extraordinary conditions of cold – such cold as makes the air into a liquid and solidifies hydrogen and oxygen – they suffer the destruction of their supposedly permanent properties. It is proved that, as these conditions are changed, and as lower and lower ranges of temperature are brought to bear upon these chemical elements, one by one their eternal properties disappear, and they lie there changed in their activities, and lose the characteristic traits which enabled them to be discovered as parts of the moving world. Downward and downward falls the temperature, property after property disappears, until science asks, bewildered, what will happen when we reach the absolute zero, what will then become of the properties of matter, what will remain of the characteristics of the elements? Is there not but one Matter, and are not all chemical elements but modifications, aggregations, of this one ultimate matter? Similarly with Force, modern science has made the magnificent generalisation that all the forces that we know are modifications of one Force, and are identical in their essential nature; that heat, and light, and all the various forces around us, electricity, magnetism and the rest, that all these are but vibrations of varying lengths and activities in a subtle medium, and that they may be transmuted the one into the other. They are not fundamentally different, but are one and the same in their root. But if this be so, if there be but one Matter, if there be but one Force, then science is now tending towards unity; and as that unity is traced or aimed at, science will have to pass out of the grosser realm of dense matter into the realm of forces working in subtle media; and we find this wondrous change that, whereas in old days the existence of force was argued for inductively, by studying the changes in matter, now science is beginning to posit the existence of force and to question whether matter is anything more than the action of force. Instead of regarding an atom as a solid indivisible particle, the tendency is to regard it as a vortex of energy, a centre of force. One writer even goes so far as to suggest that an atom is a source "through which an invisible fluid is pouring into three-dimensional space." Other atoms, "anti-atoms," may be "sinks" through which the fluid pours out. If these unite, may not inertia be neutralised as well as gravity? May there not be potential matter, and may there not be such in space, without any of the attributes which characterise matter, but ready to be vivified and form a system of worlds? Here we have H. P. B.'s atoms and laya centres, put forward tentatively as a scientific problem. Science is mounting into the invisible world and is trying to measure and to weigh that which therein it finds. Now this tendency to unity is the testimony to the One that underlies all manifestation; only one Force, only one Matter; endless

diversity of forces, transmutable into each other; endless diversity of forms, which break up again to recombine; only one Force under all forces, one Matter under all forms. It is seen that the very fact of harmony and of evolution points to a root unity, and that eternally independent self-moving particles would only perpetuate a chaos.

As science travels along this most hopeful line, we find great changes are arising in the nature of the studies that are being carried on, and we have that wonderful theory of Sir William Crookes of the genesis of the elements. He takes protyle as a starting-point, which is really Vâyu in its form on this physical plane – Prithivî Vâyu – and out of that builds one atom after another, making all the chemical elements to be bodies aggregated together by the action of a positive and a negative force. Let me just remind you of this, because some amongst you go so eagerly after modern science and despise your own literature. If you had read your *Vishnu Purâna*, with your brain, and not merely with your eyes through modern spectacles, you might have learnt that theory of Sir William Crookes long, long before he gave it. He has drawn a picture, and the picture shows an immovable axis, and around it a spiral coil, and at points in that coil are atoms of the chemical elements, generated by that coil which represents a swinging and cooling force. That spiral is in the great ocean of protyle, or primeval matter, and, as that spiral goes round and round the immovable axis, it generates chemical elements one after another, and so brings into existence the materials out of which the world is to be formed. That is the dry scientific statement summarised from his own address. But I have read in an ancient book of a mountain – which is the emblem of stability, of an axis round which everything is to revolve – thrown into a mighty ocean; and I have read of a great serpent turned round that mountain in spiral coils; on the one side the Suras are pulling and on the other side the Asuras are equally busy. Between the two – the positive and negative of modern science – evolution is started and the serpent spiral begins to turn and turn round that axis. They call the axis Mount Mandara, and they call the spiral coil the serpent Vâsuki while the axis rests on Hari as a pivot; they call the positive and the negative forces the Gods and Demons, and their churning of the ocean gives rise to the materials of the universe. Aye! That is from the seer, who, looking at the ocean of matter, described pictorially what the eyes of the spirit beheld there; while the other is the dry scientific statement of the modern thinker, who works out his magnificent generalisation as the result of his study of the forms. The seer and the scientist have met.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.