

Reincarnation of Animals

William Q. Judge (the closest colleague of H. P. Blavatsky and co-founder with her of the modern Theosophical Movement) wrote in 1894 an article titled "Reincarnation of Animals," which is published nowadays in "William Q. Judge Theosophical Articles" Vol. 1 and WQJ Pamphlet #1 "Reincarnation." He begins the article by saying:

"Very little has been said on the question whether or not the theory of Reincarnation applies to animals in the same way as to man. Doubtless, if Brahman members well acquainted with Sanscrit works on the general subject were to publish their views, we should at least have a large mass of material for thought and find many clues to the matter in the Hindu



theories and allegories. Even Hindu folk-lore would suggest much. Under all popular "superstitions" a large element of truth can be found hidden away when the vulgar notion is examined in the light of the Wisdom-Religion. . . . If they are possessed of such notions regarding the fate of animals, careful analysis might give valuable suggestion.

"Looking at the question in the light of Theosophical theories, we see that a wide distinction exists between man and animals. Man reincarnates as man because he has got to the top of the present scale of evolution. He cannot go back, for *Manas* is too much developed. He has a *Devachan* [i.e. a temporary self-created "heaven" state after death] because he is a conscious thinker. Animals cannot have *Manas* so much developed, and so cannot be self-conscious in the sense that man is. Besides all this, the animal kingdom, being lower, has the impulse still to rise to higher forms. But here we have the distinct statement by the Adepts through H.P.B. that while possibly animals may rise higher in their own kingdom they cannot in this evolution rise to the human stage, as we have reached the middle or turning-point in the fourth round. On this point H.P.B. has, in the second volume of the *Secret Doctrine* (first ed.) at p. 196, a foot note as follows:

In calling the animals "Soulless," it is not depriving the beast, from the humblest to the highest species, of a "soul," but only of a conscious surviving *Ego-soul*, i.e., that principle which survives after a man and reincarnates in a like man.

The animal has an astral body that survives the physical form for a short period; but its (animal) Monad does not reincarnate in the same, but in a higher species, and has no "Devachan" of course. It has the *seeds* of all the human principles in itself, but they are latent.

"Here the distinction above adverted to is made. It is due to the Ego-Soul, that is, to *Manas* with *Buddhi* and *Atma*. Those principles being latent in the animal, and the door to the human kingdom being closed, they may rise to higher species but not to the man stage. Of course also it is not meant that no dog or other animal ever reincarnates as dog, but that the monad has tendency to rise to a higher species, whatever that be, whenever it has passed beyond the necessity for further experience as "dog." Under the position the author assumes it would be natural to suppose that the astral form of the animal did not last long, as she says, and hence that astral appearances or apparitions of animals were not common. Such is the fact. I have heard of a few, but very few, cases where a favorite animal made an apparitional appearance after death, but even the prolific field of

spiritualism has not many instances of the kind. And those who have learned about the astral world know that human beings assume in that world the form of animal or other things which they in character most resemble, and that this sort of apparition is not confined to the dead but is more common among the living. It is by such signs that clairvoyants know the very life and thought of the person before them. It was under the operation of this law that Swedenborg saw so many curious things in his time.”

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Having read the above, which is the first part of WQJ’s article, it becomes necessary to provide a few explanations. Even with attempts at elucidation, some of these teachings are bound to remain unclear if one does not study the teachings of Theosophy individually for oneself; but the depth and richness of the topic may inspire some to do so.

He says: “we have the distinct statement by the Adepts through H.P.B. that while possibly animals may rise higher in their own kingdom **they cannot in this evolution rise to the human stage**, as we have reached the middle or turning-point in the fourth round . . . **the door to the human kingdom being closed, they may rise to higher species but not to the man stage.**”

This relates to a teaching found in “The Secret Doctrine” where HPB and her Teachers, the Masters of Wisdom or Mahatmas, assert that in the mid-point of the Root Race or Epoch (the Atlantean) which preceded ours, the “door” or possibility of entry from the lower kingdoms of Nature into the human kingdom or condition was “closed” for the entire remainder of the whole life cycle of all seven globes of the Earth Chain. In other words, those monads or spiritual essences evolving in the animal kingdom could thereafter not become human until billions of years from now, when a new Planetary Chain is produced as the “reincarnation” of our current one. It’s explained that this was because that point in time – the 4th sub-race of the 4th Root Race on the 4th Globe during the 4th Round – was *the exact mid-point* of the life of this Planetary Chain, after which a sort of balance needed to be struck for the remainder of its Seven Rounds.

“The Monads which had not reached the human stage by this point will, owing to the evolution of humanity itself, find themselves so far behind that they will reach the human stage only at the close of the seventh and last Round. They will, therefore, not be men on this chain, but will form the humanity of a future Manvantara and be rewarded by becoming “Men” on a higher chain altogether, thus receiving their Karmic compensation. To this there is *but one* solitary exception, for very good reasons, of which we shall speak farther on [Note: this is referring to the apes, which Theosophy says are descended from early man rather than the other way round, and which are destined to become extinct as a species during this Fifth Race, some of them entering the human kingdom at the close of the Sixth Race; see S.D. 1:184; 2:262-263] . . . No fresh Monads have incarnated since the middle-point of the Atlanteans . . . The last human Monad incarnated before the beginning of the 5th Root-Race. . . . Those still occupying animal forms after the middle turning-point of the Fourth Round – will not become men at all during this Manvantara. They will reach to the verge of humanity only at the close of the Seventh Round to be, in their turn, ushered into a new chain after *pralaya*.” (“The Secret Doctrine” Vol. 1, p. 173, Vol. 2, p. 302, Vol. 1, p. 184-185, 182)

This may on the surface seem very unfair for those who are thus “stuck” in the animal kingdom for millions upon millions of years but this is addressed later on in WQJ’s article.

We may also note how the article quotes HPB as saying that when Theosophy calls the animals “soulless” it does not mean they do not have an inner spiritual entity but means that they do not have an *individual* soul or a real divine *Ego* (literally “I”) like humans do. The potentiality of this is latent within it but will not become manifest until it enters the human kingdom. With regard to the Seven Principles, the animal has physical body, astral body, life-energy or vitality (Prana), a desire nature

(Kama), and in some species a certain degree of “animal-mind” which could be seen as the rudiments of Lower Manas. In a few species – particularly dolphins – the mind and intelligence is remarkably developed and seems very nearly human but still, according to Theosophy, they do not have individual souls although they undoubtedly “come almost to the point,” to use a phrase of HPB’s. But what the animals – and even plants, minerals, and elementals too, for that matter – *do* have is Spirit. Everyone and everything *is* the One Infinite Divine Spirit in its innermost essence. Theosophically, this is often called the “Monad” (literally “ultimate unit”), the conjunction of Atma and Buddhi.



“The terms “mineral,” “vegetable” and “animal” *monad* are meant to create a superficial distinction: there is no such thing as a Monad (jiva) other than divine, and consequently having been, or having to become, human.” (S.D. 2:185)

“The “Monad” is the combination of the last two “principles” in man, the 6th [i.e. Buddhi] and the 7th [i.e. Atman], and, properly speaking, the term “human monad” applies only to . . . Atma-Buddi . . . not to its highest spiritual vivifying Principle, Atma, alone. . . . Now the Monadic, or rather Cosmic Essence (if such a term be permitted) in the mineral, vegetable, and animal, though the same throughout the series of cycles from the lowest elemental up to the Deva Kingdom, yet differs in the scale of progression.” (S.D. 1:178)

“. . . “primeval man” was *man* only in external form. He was *mindless* and *soulless* . . . This speculation – if speculation it be – is at least logical, and fills the chasm between the mind of man and animal.” (S.D. 2:189)

“Between man and the animal – whose Monads (or Jivas) are fundamentally identical – there is the impassable abyss of Mentality and Self-Consciousness. What is human mind in its higher aspect, whence comes it, if it is not a portion of the essence . . . of a higher Being: one from a higher and divine plane? . . . And what is it that creates such difference, unless man is an animal *plus a living god* within his physical shell?” (S.D. 2:81)

Every human soul, according to Theosophy, is actually a divine entity, a literal god, a Being of Light, which “descended” or incarnated en masse in the soulless “animal-man” of the Third Root Race, the Lemurian. These beings became the Egos, the permanent and reincarnating spiritual individualities, of humanity. Hence our real “I” is not our *personal* self but rather this divine inner being, this Higher Manas principle, this Mind-Entity which is described as an individualised ray of the Universal Mind, and which enables a *conscious* and powerful connection between Atma, Buddhi, and the mortal physical man. They are called by various names in Theosophical literature, such as the Manasaputras, Kumaras, Agnishvattas, Solar Pitris, collective Prometheus, and the Luciferian Host.

“*The Sons of MAHAT* [i.e. a term for the Universal Mind] *are the quickeners of the human Plant. They are the Waters falling upon the arid soil of latent life, and the Spark that vivifies the human animal. They are the Lords of Spiritual Life eternal.*” (An Esoteric Commentary translated and quoted in S.D. 2:103)

“The *monad* of the animal is as immortal as that of man, yet the brute knows nothing of this: it lives an animal life of sensation just as the first human would have lived, when attaining physical development in the Third Race, had it not been for the Agnishwatta and the *Manasa* Pitris.” (S.D. 2:525)

And so – “It would be very misleading to imagine a Monad as a **separate Entity** trailing its slow way in a distinct path through the **lower Kingdoms** . . . But it is a concrete manifestation of the Universal Energy which itself **has not yet become individualized**; a sequential manifestation of the one Universal Monas. The ocean (of matter) does not divide into its potential and constituent drops until the sweep of the life-impulse reaches the evolutionary stage of man-birth. The **tendency towards segregation into individual Monads** is gradual, and in the **higher** animals comes **almost** to the point. . . . The “Monadic Essence” begins to imperceptibly differentiate towards individual consciousness in the Vegetable Kingdom.” (S.D. 1:178-179)

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Mr. Judge’s “Reincarnation of Animals” article concludes:

“The objection based on the immense number of animals both alive and dead as calling for a supply of monads in that stage can be met in this way. While it is stated that no more animal monads can enter on the man-stage, it is not said nor inferred that the incoming supply of monads for the animal kingdom has stopped. They may still be coming in from other worlds for evolution among the animals of this globe. There is nothing impossible in it, and it will supply the answer to the question, Where do the new animal monads come from, supposing that all the present ones have exhausted the whole number of higher species possible here? It is quite possible also that the animal monads may be carried on to other members of the earth-chain in advance of man for the purpose of necessary development, and this would lessen the number of their appearances here. For what keeps man here so long is that the power of his thought is so great as to make a *Devachan* for all lasting some fifteen centuries – with exceptions – and for a number who desire "heaven" a *Devachan* of enormous length. The animals, however, being devoid of developed *Manas*, have no *Devachan* and must be forced onwards to the next planet in the chain. This would be consistent and useful, as it gives them a chance for development in readiness for the time when the monads of that kingdom shall begin to rise to a new human kingdom. They will have lost nothing, but, on the contrary, will be the gainers.”

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Aside from explaining that each planet in the solar system is in reality a mass of *seven globes united together but differing in degrees of substance* and that all the monads progress sequentially and collectively from one Earth globe to another during the long journey of evolution, HPB does not really divulge much about the other six globes of our “Chain.” But here we see WQJ makes the suggestion – which is most likely an occult hint rather than a mere suggestion – that the *next* globe (which is ethereal rather than physical) of the Earth Chain is utilised in some mysterious way for ongoing evolution of those animal monads who have already “exhausted the whole number of higher species possible *here*” on *this* globe.

The above statement that Devachan lasts around 1,500 years on average is one which some students have concluded can no longer be generally applicable, seeing as the number of human souls connected with our planet has been fixed and finalised since the times of Atlantis (as we read earlier) and yet the population has increased by over 6-billion in the past century. This is suggestive that many now reincarnate far sooner than in the Victorian era and indeed on p. 112 of “The Ocean of Theosophy” WQJ specifies that those figures of 1,000 to 1,500 years between incarnations are “what the time would be for the average man of **this** century [i.e. the 19th, in which he was writing] in every land.”

If the animals will one day become human, do humans ever reincarnate as animals?

“Though the apes descend from man, it is certainly not the fact that the human Monad, which has once reached the level of humanity, ever incarnates again in the form of an animal.” (S.D. 1:185)

Although Theosophy recognises that a human soul can sink down in consciousness to an increasingly low and animalistic nature, becoming more and more of an animal-like human through successive lifetimes, it insistently maintains that although in a very far distant past we were once part of the animal kingdom, we do not and cannot *return* to it or any of the other lower kingdoms when we reincarnate, partly because a sub-human body cannot accommodate or house such a complex and highly developed entity as the human soul. Yet it is the case that religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, generally believe in and teach the possibility of the reversion of the soul to an animal incarnation or even lower as a result of bad Karma. Are we to dismiss this solely as superstition or ignorance or is there possibly some degree of truth to this teaching after all?

In her article “Transmigration of the Life Atoms,” HPB states that “It has a basis of truth; and, in fact, it is an axiomatic truth – but **only in reference to human atoms and emanations, and that not only after a man’s death, but during the whole period of his life.** The esoteric meaning of the Laws of Manu (Sec. XII, 3, and XII, 54 and 55), of the verses that state that “every act, either mental, verbal or corporeal, bears good or evil fruit (Karma), the various transmigrations of *men* (not souls) through the highest, middle, and lowest stages, are produced by his actions”; and again that “A Brahman-killer enters the body of a dog, bear, ass, camel, goat, sheep, bird, etc.,” **bears no reference to the human Ego, but only to the atoms of his body, of his lower triad, and his fluidic emanations.** . . . It is all very well for the Brahmins to distort in their own interest, the real meaning contained in these laws, but the words as quoted never meant what they were made to yield from the above verses later on. The Brahmins applied them selfishly to themselves, whereas by “Brahman,” man’s seventh principle, his immortal monad and the essence of the personal Ego were allegorically meant. He who kills or extinguishes in himself the light of Parabrahm, *i.e.*, severs his personal Ego from the Atman and thus kills the future Devachanee, becomes a “Brahman-killer.” Instead of facilitating, through a virtuous life and spiritual aspirations the mutual union of the *Buddhi* and the *Manas*, **he condemns by his own evil acts every atom of his lower principles to become attracted and drawn, in virtue of the magnetic affinity thus created by his passions, into the forming bodies of lower animals or brutes.** . . . This is the real meaning of the doctrine of Metempsychosis . . . It is not that such **amalgamation of human particles with animal or even vegetable atoms** can carry in it any idea of personal punishment *per se*, for of course it does not.”

There is also a short story by WQJ on this theme, titled “The Persian Student’s Doctrine.”

The Cause of Animal Suffering

In HPB’s article “Why Do Animals Suffer?” the question is asked “Why do the noblest animals suffer so much at the hands of men?” and the answer is given: “the blame for this universal suffering falls entirely upon our Western religion and early education. Every philosophical Eastern system, every religion and sect in antiquity – the Brahmanical, Egyptian, Chinese and finally, the purest as the noblest of all the existing systems of ethics, Buddhism – inculcates kindness and protection to every living creature, from animal and bird down to the creeping thing and even the reptile. Alone, our Western religion stands in its isolation, as a monument of the most gigantic *human* selfishness ever evolved by human brain, without one word in favor of, or for the protection of the poor animal. Quite the reverse. For theology, underlining a sentence in the Jehovistic chapter of “Creation,” interprets it as a proof that animals, as all the rest, were created for man! *Ergo* – sport has become one of the *noblest* amusements of the upper ten. Hence – poor innocent birds wounded, tortured and killed every autumn by the million, all over the Christian countries, for man’s recreation. Hence also,

unkindness, often cold-blooded cruelty, during the youth of horse and bullock, brutal indifference to its fate when age has rendered it unfit for work, and ingratitude after years of hard labour for, and in the service of man. In whatever country the European steps in, there begins the slaughter of the animals and their useless decimation. . . . Is Christianity or even the Christian layman to be blamed for it? Neither. It is the pernicious system of theology, long centuries of theocracy, and the ferocious, ever-increasing selfishness in the Western civilized countries. What *can* we do?"

So this seems to say that when animals experience suffering caused by *humans*, it is not any type of Karma belonging to the *animals* (who are not yet individual spiritual entities, as we have read) but rather Karma created and indulged in by human beings through their own ignorance and for which they will surely have to pay the Karmic penalty sooner or later. As for the question of why some *animals* cause suffering to other animals, Theosophy does not go into this in much depth but it could possibly be concluded that it is a type of *purely physical level Karma*, i.e. physical consequences and casualties ensue due to some animals' need to eat or to defend themselves (see WQJ Articles Vol. 2, p. 566). But as they lack Higher Manas, no animal is capable, let alone willing, of deliberately inflicting pain or torture of any kind on another animal with the thought-out motive of causing suffering. In the human kingdom, however, this does sadly often happen, and is one of the perils of being intelligent self-conscious individualities.

Meat Eating and Vegetarianism

As for the *eating* of animals by humans, HPB states in "The Key to Theosophy" that "when the flesh of animals is assimilated by man as food, it imparts to him, physiologically, some of the characteristics of the animal it came from. Moreover, occult science teaches and proves this to its students by ocular demonstration, showing also that this "coarsening" or "animalizing" effect on man is greatest from the flesh of the larger animals, less for birds, still less for fish and other cold-blooded animals, . . . as the matter stands, he must eat to live, and so we advise really earnest students to eat such food as will least clog and weight their brains and bodies, and will have the smallest effect in hampering and retarding the development of their intuition, their inner faculties and powers." But she then goes on to say, "Remember once for all that in all such questions we take a rational, and never a fanatical, view of things. If from illness or long habit a man cannot go without meat, why, by all means let him eat it. It is no crime; it will only retard his progress a little; for after all is said and done, the purely bodily actions and functions are of far less importance than what a man *thinks* and *feels*, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow there." (p. 260-262)

So although **Theosophy presents vegetarianism as the best and most ideal option from a metaphysical as well as ethical perspective**, it is nonetheless emphasised that to eat meat "is no crime" and that if from *illness* or even just *long habit* one feels they cannot give up meat, "by all means let him eat it." The importance of this balanced and tolerant approach to the eating of meat was repeated numerous times by WQJ in various of his articles and answers to questions. But of course, the better the standards of life and wellbeing that had been provided for the animal the better for everyone, so this is an important factor to consider if consuming meat or any other animal products.



"His [i.e. the chela/disciple's] thoughts must be predominantly fixed upon his heart, chasing therefrom every hostile thought to any living being. It (the heart) must be full of the feeling of its non-separateness from the rest of beings as from all in Nature; otherwise no success can follow."

(from H. P. Blavatsky's article "Practical Occultism")