

**THE YOGA ESSENTIALS**

**YOGI RAMACHARAKA**



**THE SPIRITUAL  
WRITINGS**

# **The Spiritual Writings of Yogi Ramacharaka**

**William W. Atkinson (Yogi Ramacharaka)**

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# **The Life Beyond Death**

## **Epigraph**

“That which we call death is but the other side of life.”

## **Chapter I - “The Other Side”**

One of the questions most frequently asked the teachers of the Wisdom of the East is this: “What do you teach regarding ‘the other side’ of the river of death?” To the trained and developed occultist, this question never seems to lose its strangeness. To such, it would seem as the question: “What do you teach regarding the ‘other side’ of the street?” would seem to the ordinary man on the street. The latter would naturally feel surprised that there should be any question of “teaching” on the subject, for the inquirer would have but to use his own eyes to obtain the answer to his query.

The Oriental teacher never fails to wonder at the many evidences of the result of mere theory and dogmatic teaching on the part of the majority of the teachers and preachers of the Western world. These so-called teachers are like the “blind leading the blind,” for they have no means of verifying their statements, and merely pass on what they have blindly received from others, who, in turn, have received their own instruction in the same way. In the Orient, on the contrary, one meets with so many persons of developed higher psychic and spiritual sense, to whom the phenomena of “the other side” is as familiar as is the phenomena of “this side,” that the “other side” seems as

real and actual as does the ordinary environment of earth-life. Among developed Orientals "the other side" is no uncharted sea, but has its currents, depths, islands, and general facts as clearly stated and understood as is the Atlantic Ocean by the Western mariner. Moreover, every educated Oriental is taught from youth that the phenomena of "the other side" need not be taken on faith, but may be actually known to those who will expend the time and study required for developing the higher senses which are possessed by all of the race.

But, from the same reasons, the developed Oriental occultist finds himself confronted with a most perplexing, not to say discouraging task when he attempts to convey his knowledge on this subject to Western students. The Western mind instinctively refuses to accept truth in the manner of the mind of the Oriental student. Not having realized by actual experience certain fundamental psychic and spiritual facts, which serve as a basis for the detailed teaching, the Western mind naturally demands "actual proof" of these basic facts before being willing to proceed further. Inasmuch as these facts must first be experienced to be known, no amount of argument ever serves to bring that conviction of truth which should serve as the fundamental basis for the detailed teaching. Consequently by the Western student, the general basic statements of the teacher are accepted either purely on faith, or else regarded as mere guesses or speculation on the part of the teacher. And, as there are thousands of such guesses and speculative theories advanced in the Western world, the student may well be excused from refusing to accept any of them as truth, for, as he often argues, "one guess is as good as another."

In the presentation of the facts of "the other side" to which the present volume is devoted, the student must realize



from the beginning that there can be no actual physical proof afforded him, in the absence of a highly developed state of his higher psychic and spiritual senses. In his case, the proof demanded is akin to that asked of the blind man, who demands proof of scarlet or any other color of the article; or like that asked by the deaf man, who demands proof of the existence of harmony in music. From the very nature of things, the proof cannot be afforded in such case. Imagine the attempt to explain the sensation of the taste of sugar to one who had never experienced the taste of anything sweet. How and where could one begin? How, and where could one proceed?

So let us understand each other thoroughly, teacher, and students. Let us understand that the teachings of this book are not offered as proof of the phenomena of "the other side," but merely in the spirit of the traveller returned from some new and strange country, and who tells the tales of his journeying and the sights seen therein. As we said to the students of our first lessons, given to the Western world nine years ago: "We do not mean that the Eastern teachers insist upon the pupil blindly accepting every truth that is presented to him. On the contrary, they instruct the pupil to accept as truth only that which he can prove for himself, as no truth is truth to one until he can prove it by his own experiments. But the student is taught that before many truths may be so proven, he must develop and unfold. The teacher asks only that the student have confidence in him as a pointer-out of the way, and he says, in effect, to the student: "This is the way; enter upon it, and on the path you will find the things of which I have taught you; handle them, weigh them, measure them, taste them, and know for yourself. When you reach any point of the path you will know as much of it as did I or any other soul at that particular stage of the journey; but until you reach a particular point, you must either accept the statements of



those who have gone before or reject the the whole subject at that particular point. Accept nothing as final until you have proven it; but if you are wise, you will profit by the advice and experience of those who have gone before. Every man must learn by experience, but men may serve others as pointers of the way. At each stage of the journey it will be found that those who have progressed a little farther on the way, have left signs and marks and guideposts for those who follow. The wise man will take advantage of these signs. I do not ask for blind faith, but only for confidence until you are able to demonstrate for yourselves the truths I am passing on to you, as they were passed on to me by those who went before” The skeptical Western student may object that we offer no “scientific proofs” of the phenomena of “the other side.” If by “scientific” he means the proofs of physical science, we agree with him. But to the advanced occultist, the term “scientific” has a much broader and wider meaning. The person who expects to weigh, measure and register spiritual things by physical standards has nothing but disappointment and failure before him, for he will never receive the proof he seeks. Physical apparatus is intended for physical objects only—the world of spirt has its own set of apparatus, which alone is capable of registering its phenomena. Therefore we wish the matter clearly understood by the reader who is undertaking the study of this book. No physical proofs are offered. There are none such, strictly speaking, to be found anywhere. Moreover, there is no attempt at argument—for there is no basis for argument between the seers of “the other side” and those whose vision is limited to the earth-plane. But this does not mean that we are offering you a mass of irrational statements, and insisting that you take them on faith. Far from this is our intent. For while the reason alone can never hope to pierce the veil separating the two sides of Life-Death, nevertheless the reason, if allowed to follow its

own reports divested of prejudice and blind adherence to teaching, will perceive a certain reasonableness in a true statement of the facts of the unknown—it will seem that the teachings square with other accepted facts, and that they explain in a reasonable way phenomena otherwise unexplainable. In short, the reason will seem that the teachings of truth reconcile apparently opposing sets of facts, and join together many obscure bits of truth which one finds accepted by his reason, but which, heretofore, he has not been able to place together and join in a connected structure of mental concept.

The student is urged to suspend judgment until he has read carefully, and then as carefully considered, what we have to say. Then let him re-read, and re-consider the book as a whole. Then let him ask himself the honest question: “Does not this seem reasonable and probable.” If he can do no more than to accept it all as a “working hypotheses,” by all means let him rest satisfied with that position—although to us the term may evoke a smile when we realize that the teaching is built upon the experience and testimony of the wise of the ages. But, if the teaching is carefully read and considered, it will prove to be regarded as more and more reasonable as the years pass by with the individual. Fact after fact will be seen to fit into the general teaching, and, as older conceptions are discarded from time to time, these teachings will be found to take their place. It is not easy to escape from a truth, once it has been presented to you. It has a way of itching your mental ear, once it has lodged there. For behind that ear is a part of you, hidden though it may be, by many sheaths, which knows—which Knows! Deny it though you may, you cannot escape from Truth once its seed has been lodged within your consciousness, for it will draw sustenance from your subconsciousness, and will in time sprout and put forth leaf and blossom.

So, after all, it matters little whether or not the student can fully grasp the teaching at this time. For Time is long, and one has all the time there is in which to master the lesson. All teachings, at the last, is but a process of seed-sowing.

## **Chapter II - "There Is No Death"**

The race has been hypnotized with the idea of Death. The common usage of the term reflects the illusion. We hear those who should know better speaking of persons being "cut down by the grim reaper;" "cut off in his prime;" "his activities terminated;" "a busy life brought to an end;" etc., the idea expressed being that the individual had been wiped out of existence and reduced to nothingness. In the Western world this is particularly true. Although the dominant religion of the West teaches the joys of the "hereafter" in such strong terms that it would seem that every believer would welcome the transition; although it might well be supposed that relatives and friends would don gay robes and deck themselves with bright flowers in token of the passage of the loved one to a happier and brighter sphere of existence—we see just the opposite manifestation. The average person, in spite of his faith and creed, seems to dread the approach of "the grim reaper," and his friends drape themselves in black robes and give every other outward token of having forever lost the beloved one. In spite of their beliefs, or expression of belief, Death has a terror which they seemingly cannot overcome.

To those who have acquired that sense of consciousness of the illusion of death, these frightful emotions have faded away. To them, while they naturally feel the sorrow of temporary separation and the loss of companionship, the loved one is seen to have simply passed on to another

phase of life, and nothing has been lost—nothing has perished. There is a centuries'-old Hindu fable, in which is told the tale of a caterpillar, who feeling the approach of the langour which betokened the end of the crawling stage of existence and the beginning of the long sleep of the chrysalis stage, called his friends around him. "It is sad," he said, "to think that I must abandon my life, filled with so many bright promises of future achievement. Cut off by the grim reaper, in my very prime, I am an example of the heartlessness of Nature. Farewell, good friends, farewell forever. Tomorrow I shall be no more." And, accompanied by the tears and lamentations of the friends surrounded his death-bed, he passed away. An old caterpillar remarked sadly: "Our brother has left us. His fate is also ours. One by one we shall be cut down by the scythe of the destroyer, like unto the grass of the field. By faith we hope to rise again, but perhaps this is but the voice inspired by a vain hope. None of us knows anything positively of another life. Let us mourn the common fate of our race." Whereupon, sadly, they departed.

The grim irony of this little fable is clearly perceived by all of us, and we smile at the thought of the ignorance which attended the first stage of the transformation of the lowly crawling thing into the glorious-hued creature, which in time will emerge from the sleep of death into a higher form of life. But, smile not, friends, at the illusion of the caterpillars—they were but even as you and I. For the Hindu story-teller of centuries ago has pictured human ignorance and illusion in this little fable of the lower forms of life. All occultists recognize in the transformation stages of the caterpillar-chrysalis-butterfly a picture of the transformation which awaits every mortal man and woman. For death to the human being is no more a termination or cessation than is the death-sleep of the caterpillar. In neither case does life cease for even a single instant—life

persists while Nature works her changes. We advise every student to carry with him the lesson of this little fable, told centuries ago to the children of the Hindu race, and passed on by them from generation to generation.

Strictly speaking, from the Oriental point of view, there is no such thing as Death. The name is a lie—the idea an illusion growing from ignorance. There is no death—there is nothing but Life. Life has many phases and forms, and some of the phases are called “death” by ignorant men. Nothing really dies— though everything experiences a change of form and activity. As Edwin Arnold so beautifully expresses it in his translation of the “Bhagavaad Gita”:

“Never the spirit was born;  
The spirit shall cease to be never.  
Never was time it was not;  
End and beginning are dreams.  
Birthless and deathless, and changeless,  
Remaineth the spirit forever;  
Death hath not touched it at all,  
Dead though the house of it seems.”

Materialists frequently urge as an argument against the persistence of life beyond the stage of death, the assumed fact that everything in nature suffers death, dissolution, and destruction. If such were really the fact, then indeed would it be reasonable to argue the death of the soul as a logical conclusion. But, in truth, nothing of this kind happens in nature. Nothing really dies. What is called death, even of the smallest and apparently most inanimate thing, is merely a change of form and condition of the energy and activities which constitute it. Even the body does not die, in the strict sense of the word.

The body is not an entity, for it is merely an aggregation of cells, and these cells are merely material vehicles for a certain form of energy which animates and vitalizes them. When the soul passes from the body, the units composing the body manifest repulsion for each other, in place of the attraction which formerly held them together. The unifying force which has held them together withdraws its power, and the reverse activity is manifested. As a writer has well said: "The body is never more alive than when it is dead." As another writer has said: "Death is but an aspect of Life, and the destruction of one material form is but a prelude to the building up of another." So the argument of the materialist really lacks its major premise, and all reasoning based thereon must be faulty and leading to a false conclusion.

But the advanced occultist, or other spiritually developed person, does not require to seriously consider the argument of the materialists, nor would he even though these arguments were a hundred times more logical. For such a person has awakened within himself the higher psychic and spiritual faculties whereby he may actually know that the soul perishes not when the body dissolves. When one is able to leave the physical body behind, and actually travel in the regions of "the other side," as in the case of many advanced individuals, any purely speculative discussions or arguments on the reality of "life after death" take on the appearance of absurdity and futility.

If an individual, who has not as yet reached the stage of psychical and spiritual discernment whereby he is given the evidence of the higher sense on the question of the survival of the soul, finds his reason demanding something akin to "proof," let him turn his mental gaze inward instead of outward, and there he will find that which he seeks. For, at the last, as all philosophy teaches us, the world of the

inner is far more real than is the world of the outer phenomena. In fact, man has no actual knowledge of the outer—all he has is the report of the inner upon the impressions received from the outer. Man sees not the tree at which he is gazing—he perceives but the inverted image of that tree pictured upon his retina. Nay, more, his mind does not even see this image, for it receives only the vibratory report of the nerves whose ends have been excited by that image. So we need not be ashamed of taking mental stock of the inner recesses of our mind, for many of the deepest truths are recorded there.

In the great subconscious and super-conscious regions of the mind are to be found a knowledge of many fundamental truths of the universe. Between two of these truths most strongly impressed there are these (1) the certainty of the existence of a Supreme Universal Power, under, back of, and supporting the phenomenal world; (2) the certainty of the immortality of the Real Self—that Something Within which fire cannot destroy, water cannot drown, nor air blow away. The mental eye turned inward will always find the “I,” with the certainty of its imperishability. It is true that this is a different kind of proof from that required regarding material and physical objects, but what of that? The truth sought is a fact of spiritual inner life, and not of the physical outer life—therefore it must be looked for within, and not without, the soul itself. The objective intellect concerns physical objects alone—the subjective intellect, or intuition, concerns psychical and spiritual objects; the one the body of things, the other the soul of things. Look for knowledge, concern either class of things in his own appropriate region of your being.

Let the soul speak for itself, and you will find that its song will ring forth clearly, strongly, and gloriously: “There is no Death; there is no Death; there is no Death; there is naught



but Life, and that Life is Life Everlasting!" Such is the song of the soul. Listen for it in the Silence, for there alone can its vibrations reach your eager ears. It is the Song of Life ever denying Death.

There is no Death—there is naught but Life Everlasting, forever, and forever, and forever.

### **Chapter III - The Planes Of Life**

One of the elementary ideas of the Yogi Philosophy most difficult for the ordinary Western mind to grasp and assimilate is that of the "planes" of life. This difficulty is most apparent when the Western student attempts to grasp the Yogi teachings regarding "the other side." The Western thought insists upon the concept of the realm of the life of the disembodied soul as a place, or places. The Western theology is responsible for this, to a great extent, although there is also to be considered the tendency of the Western mind to think in terms of objective existence, even when life apart from the objective is being considered. The average Western religionist insists upon thinking of "heaven" as a place situated somewhere in space, containing beautiful mansions of precious stones, situated on streets paved with gold. Even those who have outgrown this childish idea find it difficult to conceive of their heaven as a state rather than a place. The Western mind finds it hard to form the abstract concept, and naturally falls back on the old idea of a heaven in space.

The Oriental mind, on the contrary, finds it quite easy to grasp the idea of the several planes of existence. Centuries of familiar thought on the subject has rendered the concept as clear and definite as that of place. We have met Western thinkers who smilingly confessed that they could not divest

their concept of “planes” with that of a level strata, or layer of some kind of material substance. But this conception is as far from the truth as is the idea of mere place. A plane is a state, not a place in any sense of the word. And the student must learn to eliminate the idea of place from that of plane.

A plane is a condition or state of activity in the eternal energy of spirit in which the Cosmos lives, and moves and has its being. In any given point of space there may be many planes of activity. Taking our examples from the physical world, let us use the ordinary vibration of sound as an illustration. The air may be filled with many notes of the musical scale. Each note is simply a certain degree of vibration of the air. The notes occupy the same position in space, and yet do not conflict with each other so far as space-filling qualities are concerned. It is an axiom of physics that no two bodies of matter can occupy the same space at the same time. But thousands of these vibratory notes may occupy the same space at the same time. This is borne upon one when he listens to some great orchestral rendering a musical composition. Many instruments are playing at the same time, and the air is filled with countless vibrations, and yet one may pick out any particular instrument if he chooses, and even particular notes may be distinguished. No note is lost, and yet the entire volume is manifested in the small space of the ear drum. This is a somewhat rude illustration, but it may serve to accustom the mind to form the proper concept.

Another illustration, this time on a little higher scale, is that of the vibrations of light. Light, we know, appears as the result of the vibratory waves of the ether coming in contact with physical matter. Each color has its own place on the vibratory scale. Each ray of sunshine that reaches us is composed of a great variety of colors—the colors of the

spectrum, which may be separated by means of certain prismatic instruments. All of the colors are to be found in every point of space in which the ray of sunlight appears. They are all there, and may be separated and registered apart from the others. Moreover, beyond the realm of light visible to the human eye, there are many colors invisible to the human sight by reason of their vibrations being either too high or too low. These invisible colors may be detected by means of instruments. Perhaps these varying rates of color vibrations may help you to form the idea of the spaceless planes of existence.

Another illustration may be found in the field of electricity, in which we find fresh instances of various degrees and condition of energy occupying the same space at the same time. On improved telegraphic apparatus we find many messages passing in each direction along the same wire, each independent, and none interfering with the others. In the same way, the air may be filled with a thousand wireless-telegraphic messages, attuned to different keys and consequently not interfering with each other. The various vibrations interpenetrate each other, each seemingly being unaware of the presence of the other and not being affected by it. It is conceivable, even, that there might be a dozen worlds occupying the same portion of space, but each being keyed on a far different vibratory scale of matter, and yet none interfering with the other, the living things on each being totally unaware of the existence of those of the other. Scientific writers have amused themselves by writing fanciful stories of such a series of worlds, and indeed they wrote better than they knew, for they symbolized a metaphysical truth in physical terms.

But, it may be objected, does the Yogi Philosophy teach that these planes of Life are but varying forms of vibrations of matter? Not at all. Far from it. The teaching is that each

plane represents a different degree of vibratory energy—but not of matter. Matter is merely a very low form of vibratory energy— even the finest form of matter. There are forms of matter as much higher than the finest of which the ordinary physical scientist has knowledge, as his finest matter is higher than the hardest rock. And beyond the plane of matter rise plane upon plane of super-material energy, of which the mind of physical science does not even dare to dream. And yet, for the purpose of the illustration, we may say that it is possible to think of every one of the planes manifesting in the same point of space at the same time. So you see, the conception of planes has nothing whatever in common with that of space. In view of the foregoing, the student will see that when we speak of the planes of existence of “the other side,” we are far from meaning to indicate places or regions of space. The Yogi Philosophy has naught to do with doctrines of heavens or hells or purgatories in the sense of places. It knows of no such places, or regions, although it recognizes the real basis of the teachings which hold to the same.

In this particular volume, we shall not attempt to consider the general question of the countless planes of existence manifesting in the universe. The scope of this particular work confines us to the consideration and description of those particular planes of the Astral World which are concerned in the manifestation of the existence of the disembodied souls of the dwellers upon earth—the so-called “spirit-world” of the human race. We shall see that there are many planes and sub-planes of existence on the great Astral Plane of Life—generally known as The Astral World, in order to distinguish it from the Physical World below it in the vibratory scale. Each plane and sub-plane has its own distinguishing characteristics and phenomena, as we shall see as we proceed. And yet the same general

laws, principles, and characteristic qualities are common to all.

Finally, before we pass on the consideration of the Astral Plane, let us once more endeavor to fix in your minds the proper conception of the real nature of that which we know as “planes.” When we speak of “rising” from a lower to a higher plane, or of “descending” from a higher to a lower plane, we do not wish to be understood as picturing an ascent or descent of steps. Nor are we picturing a rising or descending from one layer or strata to another. Even the familiar symbol of rising from the ocean depths to its surface, is incorrect. The nearest mental picture possible to be made of the transition from plane to plane, is that of increase or decrease of vibrations as evidenced in sound-waves, light-waves, or waves of electricity. By tightening a violin string, one may raise its degree of vibration and therefore its note. The same may be done by heating a bar of iron causing its color to change gradually from a dull red to a delicate violet or white. Or in the case of a current of electricity, the power may be raised or lowered at will. If a still more material illustration be required, we have the case of the hardest mineral which may be changed into an invisible vapor simply by raising its degree of vibrations by heat. What is true on the lower planes of manifestation, is true of the higher. The transition from higher to lower, or lower to higher may be thought of (if desired) as a change of vibration in the energy of which all things are composed. This will come about as near to the truth as our imperfect powers of conception and comparison will permit. There are no words to express the higher phenomena—all illustration in terms of the lower planes are crude, imperfect, and unsatisfactory. But even by these lowly symbols may the mind of man learn to grasp the ideas of things above the ordinary senses, and beyond the power of ordinary terms to express.

And, now, with the above firmly fixed in your minds, let us proceed to a consideration of the Great Astral Plane of Existence.

## **Chapter Iv - The Astral Plane**

Students of occultism, Oriental and Occidental, find many references in the works of the old authorities, to that great series of planes, immediately above those of the material world, which are loosely styled the "Astral Plane." But they find the various authorities differing in their usage of the term. Many of the older authorities use the term, as we shall in this book, to designate the entire series of planes lying between those of the material world and those very exalted planes of existence, known as the "Spiritual Planes" the very nature of which is beyond the comprehension of the mind of the average man. On the other hand, some of the modern Western writers on the subject use the term the "Astral Plane" to indicate merely the lower planes and sub-planes of the Astral series—those planes which blend into the material planes on the one hand and into the higher Astral planes on the other. This has caused some confusion in the minds of those beginning the study of the planes above the material.

In this book, as in our previous volumes, we follow the example of the ancient authorities, and apply the term, as they did, to the entire great series of planes lying between the material planes and the highest spiritual planes. We consider this plan preferable, for the reason that it is more simple, and tends to prevent the student from being confused by reason of many technical distinctions.

The Astral Plane is composed of numberless planes and sub-planes, and divisions of sub-planes, rising in a gradually ascending scale from those which touch and blend in with the higher material planes, to those which touch and blend into the lower strata (if the term may be so used) of the great spiritual planes. But between these two extremes is to be found the greatest possible variety of phenomena and phases of existence. On the lower planes of the Astral are manifested the psychic activities which men know as clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, psychometry, etc. On other of the lower planes of the Astral are to be found certain forms of the "ghosts," "spooks," and other apparitions of disembodied souls which occasionally are perceived and sensed by man and some of the lower animals. On certain of these planes, also, the Astral bodies of men still in the flesh travel and manifest activity, either during the sleep of the owner of the body, or in certain trance conditions, or else when the owner deliberately leaves the physical body for the time being and projects his Astral Body on the Astral Plane.

The Astral colors are auras, which surround the physical bodies of all human beings, also manifest on certain sub-planes of the Astral. Certain other sub-planes may be called "the planes of psychic forces" by means of which various forms of psychic phenomena are performed. On similar lower planes are to be found the "thought-forms," "thought-waves," "thought-clouds," etc., emanating from the minds of human beings, which travel about affecting the thoughts and emotions of those who attract them and who are attuned to their own psychic keynote. We mention these only in passing, and for general information, rather than in detail, for these phenomena have been considered in other volumes of these series of books.



Some of the lower sub-planes of the Astral are far from being healthy or agreeable places to visit, or upon which to function, for the untrained person. In fact the experienced occultist has as little to do with them as possible, and advise all dabblers in occultism to avoid these miasmatic psychic regions as he would a swampy, fever-laden region on the material plane. Many persons have wrought great injury to themselves from attempting to penetrate these lower planes without a correct knowledge of the nature thereof, many having wrecked their bodies and minds by foolishly producing or inducing psychic conditions which cause them to function on these lower psychic planes. The old adage which informs us "that fools rush in where angels fear to tread," applies in full force in this case.

Some of these lower Astral sub-planes are filled with Astral forms of disembodied human beings, the higher principles of whom are still attached to the Astral body, and which are held earth-bound by reason of the attraction of the material world. In this region also dwell for a time the very scum of disembodied human life, having every attraction to hold them down to the things of the material world, and nothing to draw them upward. It is pitiful to see persons, who would not think of associating with this class of persons in the flesh, nevertheless welcoming psychic intercourse and communication with the same class in the Astral, accepting them as "blessed spirits" and "beautiful souls." The disgust which comes to many persons who dabble in "spirit return" at a certain class of seances, is readily understood when we understand the character of the entities which inhabit these low planes. Some of these scoundrelly dwellers on the lower Astral planes frequently counterfeit friends and relations of the inquirer, much to the pained surprise of the latter.

As the planes ascend in degree we leave this class of entities behind, and enter the realms where abide the disembodied souls of those of higher degrees of spirituality. Higher and higher rise the scale of planes and sub-planes, until at last are reached the realms of the blessed—the temporary abiding place of those who have attained a high degree of spiritual development, the “heaven worlds” which the religions of the race have sought to define according to their creeds and traditions. And, just as in the creeds of the race have been postulated the existence of

“hells” to oppose the idea of “heaven,” so in the Astral world, as might be expected, are to be found certain lower planes in which dwell the disembodied souls of persons of brutal natures and tendencies, in which the inevitable result of their earth-life is worked out. But these hells of the Astral are not eternal—the disembodied soul in turn may work out into a better environment—may be given “another chance.” The Catholic conception of “purgatory” also has its Astral existence, in the form of certain sub-planes in which, as Hamlet’s father’s ghost has said: “the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burned and purged away”—but not in the fire of materiality, the fires of memory and imagination sufficing.

In short, on the great Astral plane are to be found conditions corresponding with nearly, if not all, of the conceptions formed by the mind of man in connection with the religions of all times and places. These conceptions have not arisen by mere chance—they are the result of the experience of certain of the race who in some way established psychic connection with some of the many Astral Planes, each of whom, according to his own nature and inclinations, reported his experiences to his fellows, who afterward incorporated them in the various religions of the world. It will be remembered that every race of human

beings has had its traditions of the “place” of departed souls, the description varying greatly and yet all agreeing in some particulars. As we proceed, we will see how these reports were obtained, and how the varying reports may be harmonized and understood in connection with each other.

The term “Astral” of course means “of or pertaining to the stars.” It originally came into use in connection with occultism by reason of the common idea of men that “the other side” is “up in the skies;” among the clouds, or in the regions of the stars. Even in our own day, when the idea of heaven as a place has passed from the minds of intelligent persons, it is quite natural for us to raise the eyes in speaking of “heaven,” or to point aloft when we wish to indicate the abode of the blessed. It is difficult to shake off the habitual concepts of the race, and while we know better than to suppose that there is any special “up or down” in the Cosmos, still, we have the old inherited race-habit of thought which causes us to think of the higher realms of the soul as “up” toward the stars. And, in a similar manner, the old term “Astral” has persisted in occult terminology.

Once more we must caution the student against confounding the idea of the Astral Plane with the idea of place or places. There is no such place as the Astral Plane. The Astral Plane is neither up nor down, neither north, south, east or west. It lies in no special direction—and yet it lies in all directions. It is, first, last, and always, a state or condition and not a place. It is rather a phase or degree of vibration, rather than a portion of space. Its dimensions are those of Time—not those of Space. When we use the words; “region;” “realm;” “higher or lower;” “above or below;” we employ them merely figuratively, just as we speak of “a high rate of vibration,” or “a rate or vibration above that, etc.” We find it necessary to repeat this caution, for the reason that the average student falls into the pitfall of error

in connecting the idea of plane with that of place, when there should be no mental association between the two.

## **Chapter V - After Death**

One of the questions most frequently asked by the average person who considers the question of life on “the other side,” is this: “What is the experience of the soul immediately after it leaves the body?” It is somewhat pitiful to hear the answers given to this question by many of the so-called authorities on the subject. Verily, “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.”

The average person imagines that the soul simply steps out from the body and immediately enters into a new world of activity—a wonderland of strange and mysterious scenes. To many there exists the hope of being met on the other shore by all the loved ones who have gone before—a great reunion. While there is something which corresponds to this, there is also an entirely different condition to be experienced by the soul immediately after it passes out of the body. Let us consider the experience of the soul immediately before, and immediately after, its passage from the body, so that we may get a clearer light on the subject.

The person approaching the stage generally called “death,” but which is merely a transition stage between two great planes of life, experiences a gradual dulling of the physical senses. Sight, hearing, and feeling, grow dimmer and dimmer, and the “life” of the person seems as a flickering candle flame gradually approaching utter extinction. In many cases, this is the only phenomenon attending the approach of death. But, in many other cases, while the

physical senses are growing dimmer, the psychical senses are growing wonderfully acute. It is a common occurrence for dying persons to manifest a consciousness of what is occurring in another room, or another place. Clairvoyance frequently accompanies the approach of death, in some cases being attended by clairaudience, the dying person being conscious of sights and sounds in distant places.

There are also many instances recorded in the annals of the societies for psychical research, and far many more related in the privacy of family gatherings, in which the dying person has been able to so strongly project his personality that friends and relatives at a distance have actually seen his form, and in some few cases have been able to converse with him. A careful comparison of time shows that these apparitions, in nearly every case, have appeared before the actual death of the person, rather than after it. There are, of course, cases in which a strong desire of the dying person has caused him to project his Astral body into the presence of some one near to him, immediately after death, but these cases are far more rare than those of which we have spoken above. In the majority at these cases the phenomenon is caused by a process of thought-transference of such a higher power and degree that the visited person became impressed with the consciousness of the presence of the dying friend or relative even while the soul of the latter still remained in the body.

In many cases, also, the dying person becomes psychically conscious of a nearness to loved ones who have passed on before. This, however, does not necessarily mean that these persons are actually present on the scene. One must remember that the limitations of space are largely wiped out on the Astral Plane, and that one may come into close rapport with the soul of another without there existing any near space relationship.

In other words, while the two souls may not be in what may be called a nearness in space, they may nevertheless, enjoy the closest relationship in mind and spirit. It is very difficult for one still in the flesh to realize this. On the material plane, the laws of space of course govern. Telepathy gives us the key to the phenomena of "the other side." Two persons in the flesh may experience the closest relationship by means of the communion of their mental principles, and yet may be on opposite sides of the world. In the same way, two souls may enjoy the closest soul communion and communication, without the question of space nearness coming into question. As we have said, the dying person frequently enters into soul communion and communication with those already on the other side, and is greatly cheered thereby. And this is a beautiful fact attending that which we call "death"—this fact that there really do occur those beautiful reunion of loved ones, of which good folk discourse so hopefully. But not in just the way these good folk usually imagine.

The dying person's Astral body gradually disengages itself from its physical counterpart. The "Astral body," as the student probably is aware, is an exact counterpart of the physical body, and during life the two dwell together in the majority of cases. The Astral body, however, leaves the physical body at the death of the latter, and forms the covering of the soul for some time. It is really a form of material substance, of a degree, however, so fine that it escapes the tests which reveal ordinary matter. Toward the last the "Astral body" actually slips from the physical body and is connected with it only by a slender thread or cord of Astral substance. Finally this thread snaps, and the "Astral body" floats away, inhabited by the soul which has left the physical body behind it. But this "Astral body" is no more the soul that was the physical body which it has just left.

Both physical and “Astral bodies” are merely temporary coverings for the soul itself.

The soul leaving the physical body (in the “Astral body”) is plunged into a deep sleep or state of coma resembling the condition of the unborn child for several months before birth. It is being prepared for re-birth on the Astral Plane, and requires time in order to adjust itself to the new conditions and to gain strength and vigor required for its new phase of existence. Nature is full of these analogies—birth on the physical and on the Astral Plane have many points of resemblance, and both are preceded by this period of coma. During this sleep-like stage, the soul dwells in the “Astral body” which serves as its covering and protection, just as the womb serves as the protection for the child approaching physical birth.

Before passing on, however, we should stop to consider certain features of the life of the soul in this stage. Ordinarily the soul sleeps in peace, undisturbed by, and protected from, outward influences. There are two things, however, which tend to create an exception in some cases, namely that which may be called the dreams of the sleeping soul. These dreams arise from two general classes of causes, viz: (1) intense desire filling the mind of the dying person, such as love, hate, or unfulfilled tasks or duties; (2) the strong desires and thoughts of those left behind, providing such persons are in sufficiently close rapport with the departed soul, by reason of love or other strong attachments. Either or both of these causes tend to produce a restlessness in the sleeping soul, and have a tendency to attract the soul back to the scenes of earth, either in a dreamy kind of telepathic communication, or else, in a few rare cases, by something approaching the state of somnambulism or sleep-walking of the physical life. These conditions are regrettable, for they disturb the soul



and defer its evolution and development in its new phase of existence. Let us consider this in a little more detail, before passing on.

A person passing from the material into the Astral Plane in a peaceful state of mind is seldom disturbed in the Astral sleep by dream-like states. Instead, he lives naturally through the coma state and then evolves easily into the new phase of existence as naturally as the unfolding of the bud into the flower. It is different with the individual whose mind is filled with strong desires concerning earth-life, or with strong remorse, hate, or great love and anxiety for those left behind. In the latter case the poor soul is often tormented by these earthly ties, and its Astral sleep is rendered feverish and fretful. In such cases there is often also an involuntary attempt made to communicate with, or to appear to, persons still on the material plane. In extreme cases, as we have said, there may even ensue the state resembling earthly somnambulism or sleep-walking, and the poor sleeping soul may even visit its former scenes. In such cases, when the apparition is visible to men it will be noted that there is a half-awake manner and air about the apparition—a something lacking that was present in earth-life. The history of “ghosts” bears out this statement, and the explanation just given is the only one which really throws light on the subject. In time, however, these poor earth-bound souls become tired, and finally sink into the blessed sleep which is their just lot. In the same way, the strong desires of those left behind often serves to establish a rapport condition between such persons and the departed soul, causing it to become restless and uneasy. Many a well meaning person has acted so as to retard the natural processes of the Astral Plane in relation to some loved one who has passed away, and has denied to the tired soul that rest which it has merited.