

**Spiritual Science**



**Deep Dive Article**

# Kamaloka

Excerpts from RS Lectures on Kamaloka

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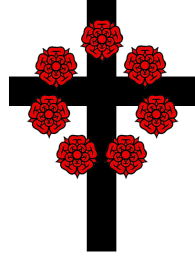
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Ascent of the Blessed, Hieronymus Bosch, 1505–1515





You have done more for your real occult development if you have succeeded in transforming a single deep-rooted trait than if you have acquired unlimited external knowledge. GA97

## Introduction

Kamaloka is a time of renunciation for man because he must relinquish his desires to immerse himself in the spiritual world. This Kamaloka period lasts longer or shorter depending on whether the human soul is ready to renounce his yearnings. What matters here is how man has already learned to regulate his passions and enjoy life despite refraining from such cravings. (German: zu verzichten).

However, there are pleasures and desires of a lower and higher nature. Enjoyments and desires for the satisfaction of which the physical body is not the actual instrument of gratification, we call higher pleasures and aspirations. These do not belong to that which man has to get rid of after death. If a man still has something that draws him to physical existence – lower enjoyment – he remains in the astral region of Kamaloka. Then, when nothing more draws him to these excesses, he becomes capable of living in the spiritual world. The soul's sojourn in Kamaloka lasts about a third of its past life.

It, therefore, depends on how old the person was when he died, i.e., how long he lived on earth. Yet the time in Kamaloka is by no means just terrible and unpleasant. In any case, it makes the soul more independent of physical desires. The more he has already made himself independent in his life and taken an interest in contemplating spiritual things, the easier this Kamaloka time will be for him. He thereby becomes freer and thus becomes grateful for this time. The feeling of deprivation in earthly life transforms into a sense of bliss in Kamaloka. Paradoxical feelings arise for everything a person has learnt to love to do without during his lifetime in that it grows into enjoyment in Kamaloka.

Source (German): Rudolf Steiner – GA 108 – Die Beantwortung von Welt- und Lebensfragen durch Anthroposophie – Breslau, 2 December 1908 – (page 56,57)



# 1

## Kamaloka Overview

Source: THEOSOPHY AND ROSICRUCIANISM, GA 100: III. Man's Consciousness, His Work Upon the Lower Members of His Being and His Destiny After Death

*Kassel, 18th June 1907*

Imagine that you are enjoying a specially tasty dish — you eat it and enjoy its taste. This pleasure is not rooted in the physical body, but in the astral body, but it can only arise because it has the required organ, namely a tongue and a palate. Thus the physical body supplies the instrument for the gratifications of the astral body.

Now, what takes place after death, when the physical body has been discarded? The instrument is lacking, the transmitter of enjoyment, but the astral body has not lost the longing and desire for some special pleasure. Now imagine this state as vividly as possible. It resembles the condition of a man who is thirsting in the midst of a desert. After death the astral body still feels the desire for certain enjoyments, in the same measure in which it was accustomed to feel this during the past life on earth, and for this reason the time after death is for so many people a time of unsatisfied desires.

This condition is named Kamaloka (Kama means desire, and locus means place). It is the same condition which we find described in many myths — for instance, the tortures of Tantalus, or purgatory. Of course, this condition is not only a torturing one; it tortures us until the astral body has lost the habit of desiring enjoyments. The more needs the astral body feels during physical life the longer does this condition of Kamaloka last.

But you may gather from the above, that according to the quality of these needs experienced by a human being during his past life on earth; the astral body may encounter in Kamaloka experiences which are not only torturing, but under circumstances very good and pleasant. The astral body will, for instance, feel pleasure in every moment of joy given to him by Nature and its beauty. In order to experience this enjoyment of Nature and its beauty, we must indeed have eyes to see, but beauty is something that

transcends the physical, and therefore this condition is in Kamaloka the source of increased enjoyment. These things produce great joys and wonderful experiences even during the Kamaloka period.

Thus we may render this Kamaloka time more beautiful by emancipating ourselves from purely physical enjoyments. If you consider this, you will be able to understand several things in life, for instance, everything which constitutes art. The more ideal art is, the more the ideal essence manifests itself through art, the stronger and the more uplifting will, be the influence of the work of art, an influence transcending physical life. The Spirit is the real element of art. The materialistic short-sightedness, alone has led to naturalism in art.

After passing through this Kamaloka period, we therefore reach the stage where we have lost the habit of physical enjoyments, and this means that we must now pass through an entirely different condition. The soul now discards all those parts of the astral body which man, that is to say, the Ego, has not yet transformed. The discarded astral sheath now constitutes the third corpse which we leave behind.





## 2

# Life of the Soul in Kamaloka

Source:

<https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA095/English/RSPAP1986/19060824p01.html>

*24 August 1906, Stuttgart*

How does man spend the period between death and a new birth? To call death the elder brother of sleep is not unjustified, for between sleep and death there is a certain relationship; but even so there is a great, decisive difference between them. Let us consider what happens to a man from the moment when he falls asleep to the moment when he wakes up. This stretch of time appears to us as a kind of unconsciousness; only a few memories of the dream-state, sometimes confused and sometimes fairly clear, emerge from it. If we want to understand sleep properly, we must recall the separate members of the human entity.

We have seen that man consists of seven members. Four are fully developed, the fifth only partly so, and of the sixth and seventh only the seed and outline so far exist. Thus we have:

1. The physical body, which we can perceive with our ordinary senses.
2. The etheric body, which permeates the physical body with a delicate luminosity.
3. The astral body.
4. The Ego-body or consciousness body.

This "Ego-body" contains:

5. Spirit-Self, or Manas, partly developed, party still in embryo.
6. Life-Spirit, or Buddhi.
7. Spirit-Man, or Atma.

These last two are present only as seeds.

In the waking state a man has the first four of these bodies around him in space. The etheric body extends a little beyond the physical body on all sides. The astral body extends about two-and-a-half times the length of the head beyond the physical body, surrounds it like a cloud and fades away as you go from the head downwards. When a man falls asleep, the physical and etheric bodies remain on the bed, united as in the daytime. The astral body loosens its hold, and the astral body and Ego-body raise themselves out of the physical body. Now since all perceptions, concepts and so on are dependent on the astral body, which is now outside the physical body, man loses consciousness in sleep, for in this life he needs the physical brain as an instrument of consciousness; without it he cannot be conscious.

What does the loosened astral body do during the night? A clairvoyant can see that it has a specific task. It does not, as some Theosophists will tell you, merely hover above the physical body, inactive, like a passive image; it works continuously on the physical body. During the day the physical body gets tired and used up, and the task of the astral body is to make good this weariness and exhaustion. It renovates the physical body and renews the forces which have been used up during the day. Hence comes the need for sleep, and hence also its refreshing, healing effect. The question of dreams we will deal with later.

When a man dies, things are different. The etheric body then leaves him, as well as the astral body and Ego. These three bodies rise away and for a time remain united. At the moment of death the connection between the astral body and etheric body, on the one hand, and with the physical body, on the other, is broken, particularly in the region of the heart. A sort of light shines forth in the heart, and then the etheric body, the astral body and the Ego can be seen rising up from out of the head.

The actual instant of death brings a remarkable experience: for a brief space of time the man remembers all that has happened to him in the life just ended. His entire life appears before his soul in a moment, like a great tableau. Something like this can happen during life, in rare moments of great shock or anger — for instance a man who is drowning, or falling from a great height, when death seems imminent, may see his whole life before him in this way.

A similar phenomenon is the peculiar tingling feeling we have when a limb "goes to sleep". What happens here is that the etheric body is loosened. If a finger, for example, goes to sleep, a clairvoyant would see a

little second finger protruding at the side of the actual finger: this is a part of the etheric body which has got loose. Herein also lies the danger of hypnotism, for the brain then has the same experience as the finger has when it goes to sleep. The clairvoyant can see the loosened etheric body hanging like a pair of bags or sacks on either side of the head. If the hypnotism is repeated, the etheric body will develop an inclination to get loose, and this can be very dangerous. The victims become dreamy, subject to fainting fits, lose their independence, and so on.

A similar loosening of the etheric body occurs when a person is faced with a sudden danger of death. The cause of this similarity is that the etheric body is the bearer of memory; the more strongly developed it is, the stronger a person's faculty of memory will be. While the etheric body is firmly rooted in the physical body, as normally it is, its vibrations cannot act on the brain sufficiently to become conscious, because the physical body with its coarser rhythms conceals them. But in moments of deadly danger the etheric body is loosened, and with its memories it detaches itself from the brain and a man's whole life flashes before his soul. At such moments everything that has been inscribed on the etheric body reappears; hence also the recollection of the whole past life immediately after death. This lasts for some time, until the etheric body separates from the astral body and the Ego.

With most people, the etheric body dissolves gradually into the world-ether. With lowly, uneducated people it dissolves slowly; with cultivated people it dissolves quickly; with disciples or pupils it dissolves slowly again, and the higher a man's development, the slower the process becomes, until finally a stage is reached when the etheric body dissolves no longer.

In the case of ordinary men, then, we have two corpses, of the physical and etheric bodies; we are left with the astral body and the Ego. If we are to understand this condition we must realise that in his earthly life a man's consciousness depends entirely on his senses. Let us think away everything that comes to us through our senses: without our eyes, absolute darkness; without our ears, absolute silence; and no feeling of heat or cold without the appropriate senses. If we can clearly envisage what will remain when we are parted from all our physical organs, from everything that normally fills our daytime consciousness and enlivens the soul, from everything for which we have to be grateful to the body all day long, we shall begin to form some conception of what the condition of life is after death, when the two corpses have been laid aside. This condition is called Kamaloka, the place of desires. It is not some region set apart: Kamaloka is where we

are, and the spirits of the dead are always hovering around us, but they are inaccessible to our physical senses. What, then, does a dead man feel? To take a simple example, suppose a man eats avidly and enjoys his food. The clairvoyant will see the satisfaction of his desire as a brownish-red thought-form in the upper part of his astral body. Now suppose the man dies: what is left to him is his desire and capacity for enjoyment. To the physical part of a man belongs only the means of enjoyment: thus we need gums and so forth in order to eat. The pleasure and the desire belong to the soul, and they survive after death. But the man no longer has any means of satisfying his desires, for the appropriate organs are absent. And this applies to all kinds of wishes and desires. He may want to look at some beautiful arrangements of colours — but he lacks eyes; or to listen to some harmonious music — but he lacks ears.

How does the soul experience all this after death? The soul is like a wanderer in the desert, suffering from a burning thirst and looking for some spring at which to quench it; and the soul has to suffer this burning thirst because it has no organ or instrument for satisfying it. It has to feel deprived of everything, so that to call this condition one of burning thirst is very appropriate. This is the essence of Kamaloka. The soul is not tortured from outside, but has to suffer the torment of the desires it still has but cannot satisfy.

Why does the soul have to endure this torment? The reason is that man has to wean himself gradually from these physical wishes and desires, so that the soul may free itself from the Earth, may purify and cleanse itself. When that is achieved, the Kamaloka period comes to an end and man ascends to Devachan.

How does the soul pass through its life in Kamaloka? In Kamaloka a man lives through his whole life again, but backwards. He goes through it, day by day, with all its experience's, events and actions, back from the moment of death to that of birth. What is the point of this? The point is that he has to pause at every event and learn how to wean himself from his dependence on the physical and material. He also relives everything he enjoyed in his earthly life, but in such a way that he has to do without all this; it offers him no satisfaction. And so he gradually learns to disengage himself from physical life. And when he has lived through his life right back to the day of his birth, he can, in the words of the Bible, enter into the "kingdom of Heaven". As Christ says, "Unless ye became as little children,

ye cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven." All the Gospel sayings have a deep meaning, and we come to know their depth only by gradually entering into the divine wisdom.

There are some particular moments in Kamaloka which must be singled out as specially important and instructive. Among the various feelings a man can have as part of his ordinary life is the sheer joy of being alive, of living in a physical body. Hence he feels the lack of physical body as one of his worst deprivations. We can thus understand the terrible destiny and the horrible torments which have to be endured by the unfortunates who end their lives through suicide. When death comes naturally, the three bodies separate relatively easily. Even in apoplexy or any other sudden but natural form of death, the separation of these higher members has in fact been prepared for well in advance, and so they separate easily and the sense of loss of the physical body is only slight. But when the separation is as sudden and violent as it is with the suicide, whose whole organism is still healthy and firmly bound together, then immediately after death he feels the loss of the physical body very keenly and this causes terrible pains. This is a ghastly fate: the suicide feels as though he had been plucked out of himself, and he begins a fearful search for the physical body of which he was so suddenly deprived. Nothing else bears comparison with this. You may retort that the suicide who is weary of life no longer has any interest in it; otherwise he would not have killed himself. But that is a delusion, for it is precisely the suicide who wants too much from life. Because it has ceased to satisfy his desire for pleasure, or perhaps because some change of circumstances has involved him in a loss, he takes refuge in death. And that is why his feeling of deprivation when he finds himself without a body is unspeakably severe.

But Kamaloka is not so hard for everyone. If a man has been less dependent on material pleasures, he naturally finds the loss of his body easier to endure. Even he, however, has to shake himself free from his physical life, for there is a further meaning in Kamaloka. During his life a man does not merely do things which yield pleasure; he lives also in the company of other men and other creatures. Consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, he causes pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, to animals and men. All such occasions he will encounter again as he lives through the Kamaloka period; he returns to the place and moment when he was the cause of pain to another being. At that time he made someone else feel pain; now he has to suffer the same pain in his own soul. All the torment I ever caused to other beings I now have to live through in my own soul. I enter into the person or the animal and come to

know what the other being was made to suffer through me; now I have to suffer all these pains and torments myself. There is no way of avoiding it. All this is part of the process of freeing oneself — not from the working of karma, but from earthly things. A vivisectionist has a particularly terrible life in Kamaloka.

It is not for a Theosophist to criticise what goes on in the world around him, but he can well understand how it is that modern men have come to actions of this kind. In the Middle Ages no one would have ever dreamt of destroying life in order to understand it, and in ancient times any doctor would have looked on this as the height of madness. In the Middle Ages a number of people were still clairvoyant; doctors could see into a man and could discern any injury or defect in his physical body. So it was with Paracelsus (*Theophrastus Paracelsus von Hohenheim*, 1493–1541), for example. But the material culture of modern times had to come, and with it a loss of clairvoyance. We see this particularly in our scientists and doctors; and vivisection is a result of it. In this way we can come to understand it, but we should never excuse or justify it. The consequences of a life which has been the cause of pain to others are bound to follow, and after death the vivisectionist has to endure exactly the same pains that he inflicted on animals. His soul is drawn into every pain he caused. It is no use saying that to inflict pain was not his intention, or that he did it for the sake of science or that his purpose was good. The law of spiritual life is inflexible.

How long does a man remain in Kamaloka? For about one-third of the length of his past life. If for instance he has lived for seventy-five years, his time in Kamaloka will be twenty-five years. And what happens then? The astral bodies of people vary widely in colour and form. The astral body of a primitive kind of man is permeated with all kinds of shapes and lower desires: its background colour is a reddish-grey, with rays of the same colour emanating from it; in its contours it is no different from that of certain animals. With a highly educated man, or an idealist such as Schiller or a saint such as St. Francis of Assisi, (*Francis of Assisi*, 1181–1226) things are quite different. They denied themselves many things; they ennobled their desires and so forth. The more a man uses his Ego to work on himself, the more rays will you see spreading out from the bluish sphere which is his Ego-centre. These rays indicate the forces by means of which a man gains power over his astral body. Hence one can say that a man has two astral bodies: one part has remained as it was, with its animal impulses; the other results from his own work upon it.

When a man has lived through his time in Kamaloka, he will be ready to raise the higher part of his astral body, the outcome of his own endeavours, and to leave the lower part behind. With savages and uncultivated people, a large part of the lower astral body remains behind; with more highly developed people there is much less. When for example a Francis of Assisi dies, very little will be left behind; a powerful higher astral body will go with him, for he will have worked greatly on himself. The remaining part is the third human corpse, consisting of the lower impulses and desires which have not been transmuted. This corpse continues to hover about in astral space, and may be a source of many dangerous influences.

This, too, is a body which can manifest in spiritualistic seances. It often survives for a long time, and may come to speak through a medium. People then begin to believe that it is the dead man speaking, when it is only his astral corpse. The corpse retains its lower impulses and habits in a kind of husk; it can even answer questions and give information, and can speak with just as much sense as the "lower man" used to display. All sorts of confusions may then arise, and a striking example of this is the pamphlet written by the spiritualist, Langsdorf, in which he professes to have had communication with H. P. Blavatsky. To Langsdorf the idea of reincarnation is like a red rag to a bull; there is nothing he would not do to refute this doctrine. He hates H.P.B. because she taught this doctrine and spread it abroad. In his pamphlet he purports to be quoting H.P.B. as having told him not only that the doctrine of reincarnation was false but that she was very sorry ever to have taught it. This may indeed be all correct — except that Langsdorf was not questioning and quoting the real H.P.B. but her astral corpse. It is quite understandable that her lower astral body should answer in this way if we remember that during her early period, in her *Isis Unveiled*, she really did reject and oppose the idea of reincarnation. She herself came to know better, but her error clung to her astral husk.

This third corpse, the astral husk, gradually dissolves, and it is important that it should have dissolved completely before a man returns to a new incarnation. In most cases this duly happens, but in exceptional cases a man may reincarnate quickly, before his astral corpse has dissolved. He has difficulties to face if, when he is about to reincarnate, he finds his own astral corpse still in existence, containing everything that had remained imperfect in his former life.





### 3

## Rosicrucian Esotericism, GA 109: Man Between Death and Rebirth

Source: <https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA109/English/AP1978/19090606p01.html>

*Budapest, June 6, 1909*

Yesterday we heard about what takes place at the moment of death, how the etheric body, the astral body and ego bearer pass out of the physical body and the tableau of memory is arrayed before the soul. An intrinsic feature of this tableau is that the events present themselves simultaneously and provide a review in the form of a kind of panorama. The essential point, however, is that it is perceived as a picture. Events in physical life are connected with happiness or pain but there are no such experiences during the first few days after death. The tableau of memories is an entirely objective picture. Let us try to make this clear by means of an example. We see ourselves in a fatal, agonizing situation and follow the course it takes, but there is no experience of pain. It is like a picture at which we are looking, which, let us say, depicts martyrdom. We do not feel the pain that is involved, but merely see the event objectively. The same applies to the memory tableau after death. It appears directly the etheric body emerges, frees itself from the physical body and then dissolves in the universal cosmic ether. The extract, or essence containing the fruit of the past life, remains.

There now begins for the soul an essentially different period, the period of breaking its attachment to the physical world. The best way to think of this is to remind ourselves that for an occultist, urges and desires are realities. What is contained in the astral body is not nullified after death when the physical body has been laid aside, but all the urges and desires are present. An individual who was a bon vivant during his life does not, at death, lose his desire for tasty foods, for desire clings to the astral body and he has lost only the physical equipment of palate, tongue and so forth, by means of which his greed can be satisfied. His condition — the same applies in different circumstances — is comparable with that of someone suffering from terrible thirst without any possibility of quenching it. He suffers from these longings and from having to forego the prospect of satisfaction. The purpose of this suffering is to realize what it means to

have desires that can be satisfied only through physical instruments. This condition is called Kamaloka, the realm of desires, where habits are broken. It lasts for a third of the time spent by a human being between birth and death; perhaps it may be possible later on to go into the matter with greater exactitude. So if somebody dies at the age of sixty, it can be said that he spends twenty years, a third of his past life, in Kamaloka. As a rule, therefore, Kamaloka lasts until a man has rid himself of all the desires that still link him with the physical plane. This is one aspect of the period of Kamaloka, but we will study it from still another.

What a human being experiences in the physical body is of value to him because he evolves to higher and higher stages as the result of what he achieves on earth. That is the essential point. On the other hand, between birth and death there are many inducements for individuals to create hindrances to their development, for example, everything that we do to injure our fellowmen. Every time when, at the cost of our fellowmen, we provide satisfaction for our own aims or embark for self-seeking reasons on a project that in some way affects the world, we create a hindrance to our development: Suppose we give someone a box on the ear. The physical and moral pain connected with it is a hindrance to our development. This hindrance would cling to us for all our subsequent lives in future epochs if we did not expunge it from the world. During the Kamaloka period an impetus is given to a man to get rid of these hindrances to his development. During the period of Kamaloka the individual concerned lives over his whole life in backward order, three times as quickly. The significant characteristic of the astral world, of Kamaloka, is that things appear as mirror images; this is the confusing element for a pupil when he enters the astral world. For example, he must read the number 346 as 643; he must reverse everything when he is looking into the astral world. So it is, too, in the case of all passions.

Suppose that as the result of genuine training or of pathological conditions, someone becomes clairvoyant. To begin with he sees his own urges and passions streaming out of him; they appear to him in the form of varied shapes and figures and approach him in rays from all sides. Whoever becomes clairvoyant in the astral realm, either in a well-regulated or irregular way, immediately sees these figures, which in the form of goblins or demonic beings, rush upon him. This is a distressing experience, especially for individuals who become clairvoyant but know nothing of it. It will become less and less infrequent because we are living today in a stage of evolution when in a number of people the eyes for sight of the spiritual world are opening. This must also be said in order that those who have the

experience shall not be alarmed. Spiritual science is there in order to lead human beings into the spiritual world. For many who become clairvoyant this process is fraught with much unhappiness of soul because they are ignorant of the facts and conditions. They see things in the astral world as mirror images and they see other things too in the spiritual world. In the physical world, when a hen lays an egg, you see the hen first and then the egg; astrally you see the process of the egg going back into the hen. Everything is experienced in reverse order.

Think of a man who dies at the age of sixty and then, in Kamaloka, comes to the point when, at the age of forty he gave someone a box on the ear. Now, in Kamaloka, he experiences everything that the other person experienced; he is literally within the body of the other. Thus, a man lives his life in backward order to his birth. But he does not experience pain only, he also experiences the happiness, the joy he has given to others. Little by little the soul discards the hindrances to its development and evolution and must be thankful to the wise guidance that makes compensation possible. Together with the will to make compensation, the soul receives something like a token, an impulse of will, to make reparation for what hinders its development, and in the coming life it is able to do this. We realize, therefore, that the objective tableau is something altogether different from the retrospective experiences in Kamaloka. In Kamaloka a man experiences exactly what the other person felt as the result of his behavior; he experiences the other side of his own deeds. But not only has this cross to be experienced. What has been experienced here (in physical life) as pain, is experienced in yonder world as happiness and joy — happiness and joy, therefore, as the opposite of what they were in the physical world. The purpose of Kamaloka is to impart to the soul what the tableau of memory cannot impart, namely, the experiences of pain and joy in retrospect.

When Kamaloka has been lived through, a kind of third corpse is discarded. The physical corpse was the first to be discarded, then the etheric corpse, which dissolves in the cosmic ether, and now the astral corpse is laid aside. This astral corpse comprises whatever from a man's astral body has not yet been purified and regulated by his ego. What was once his as the bearer of his urges and passions and has not been transformed and spiritualized by his ego, frees itself after the period of Kamaloka. On his further path the human being takes with him an extract of his astral body: firstly, the sum total of all the good will impulses, and secondly, what he has transformed through his ego. Whatever urges he has ennobled into beauty, goodness and morality form the extract of his

astral body. At the end of the Kamaloka period the human being consists of the ego and around it he has laid, as it were, the extracts of the astral body and of the etheric body, the good impulses of will.



## 4

# On the Forming of Destiny

Source:

<https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA157a/English/APC1927/19151118p01.html>

*18 November 1915, Berlin*

Now, there is one idea, one characteristic, which has indeed been expressed many times already, but which we will once more bring forward in connection with the life which occupies a third of the earth-life just elapsed, and which we are accustomed to call the life in Kamaloka. If you are living here on the earth and somebody strikes you, you are aware of it. You perceive it, and say: he has struck me. And as a rule it makes a difference whether somebody hits you, or whether you hit him, and if you hear something said by someone, you have not the same experience as when you yourself say something. All this is quite reversed in Kamaloka life, in which we live our life backwards between death and rebirth. To use this rough illustration it is then as follows. If you have given anybody a blow in life, you feel what the other person felt through the blow. If you have injured another through a word, you experience the feeling you caused him. Thus you feel the experience of the other soul. In other words, you experience the results brought about by your own deeds. We experience in this journey backwards everything which other people have experienced through us during our life here, between birth and death. If you have lived here between birth and death with many hundreds of men, these men have experienced something through you. But here in physical life you cannot feel that which those others felt and experienced through you, you only experience what they make you go through. After death this is reversed, and it is essential that we should experience everything in this review which others have suffered through us. Thus we undergo the effects of the last earth existence, and the task of these years really lies in our experiencing them. Now, while we are undergoing these effects, the experience is transformed in us into forces, and it happens in the following manner: Suppose I have offended a man, who has thereby suffered bitterly. During Kamaloka I now experience this bitterness myself. I go through it as my own experience. And while I now experience it, it makes good in me the force which must work as opposition; that is, while I undergo this bitterness, I create in myself the force to wipe away from the

world this bitterness. I thus realise all the effects of my deeds and thereby absorb the force to wipe them away. And during this time in Kamaloka — which lasts a third of the earth-life — I absorb all the forces which may be expressed as an intense longing in the now disembodied soul, to remove everything which destroys perfection by retarding the soul's evolution. If you ponder over this you will see that man himself makes his own Karma, that is, that he has in himself the wish to become such that everything undesirable may be wiped out. Thus is Karma prepared, during this particular time. We incorporate into our souls the force which we must take up between death and rebirth, in order to bring about in the next incarnation that configuration of our life which we are able to regard as the right one. This is how Karma is created. In order to understand these things aright — not only theoretically but so to grasp them that they may penetrate deeply into our forces of feeling and willing — we must be clear that the whole mode of feeling common to the dead is absolutely different from that of the living. The living may very easily say, 'I pity this or that dead man because he has to suffer something from which he cannot escape!' But suppose he has terribly wronged another and can do nothing to put it right, you may perhaps feel sorry for the dead man, but that is quite uncalled for; for he desires nothing more than to be able to evolve the forces whereby he can balance the wrong. That is the very thing which he regards as precious. You would thus be wishing that he should not reach what he himself most longs for. To attain this he must undergo all the aforesaid suffering, for the positive develops out of the negative. Through insight into that which we have done, we develop the power of making compensation.

Thus we may say that at the end of this Kamaloka period a man has already determined, in accordance with his last life and its recapitulation, how he will enter the next incarnation in his existence; and in what relation he will stand to this or that person in order to compensate this or that. There we actually determine our Karma for the life we are to enter.

The first part of our time is spent in assimilating from the spiritual world the forces through which we can build up humanity in general, and through which we can form for ourselves a body suitable for our own individuality. First we have the plan of our Karma. Then we must fashion the human body to this end. That requires a much longer time, and takes place later on. Now, you can see from this that the essential of the time in Kamaloka lies in the fact that it gives us the possibility of ethically preparing our next incarnation in the right manner. We must be quite clear that each following incarnation depends on the earlier ones. We see how

our following incarnations are prepared. And we see that the entire mode of a man's life depends on the way in which he went through his former life. The objection is raised by persons who have not yet fully considered the matter, that this contradicts a man's freedom. I will return to this later — it does not contradict freedom.

If we thus observe individual persons in life we find that they are very, very different; no matter how many men there are on the earth, they are all different. Yet one may distinguish categories. There are, for instance, men who so behave that from their earliest youth we can see that as individuals they are specially suited for this, or that. As you know, there are such people. Even in childhood we can predict that they will accomplish some definite purpose. They thrust themselves into it, as it were. They possess activity. They have a special task, because they develop force for this end. Others we find who are interested in many things but have no definite inclination to any one thing. They take up many things. Perhaps later in life they may come to a definite task which is not specially suited to them; they might perhaps have been able to do something else quite as well. In short, people are quite different one from another in reference to the way in which they act in life. And this really makes life possible. There are men, for example, who enter life, and who do not seem to have much to do, externally. But they need only speak a word or two to have an influence on people. Such men work more through their inner being. Others work more externally. That is intimately connected with the manner in which they have lived through their previous incarnation. There are persons who die in early youth — before the age of thirty-five — in order to have these very limitations. Such men with regard to their death in this incarnation are in a quite different position from those who die after the age of thirty-five. One who dies before the age of thirty-five still stands nearer to the world from which he descended at birth. This thirty-fifth year is an important boundary. One then crosses a bridge, as it were. The world out of which a man has descended then withdraws, and he produces a new spiritual world from his inner being. It is important that we should distinguish this. And now suppose a man dies before the age of thirty-five. On reincarnating, those forces develop in him which he did not use in the years which would have followed his thirty-fifth year. Such men, who before the thirty-fifth year go through death in this way in one incarnation, thereby economise for the next incarnation certain forces, which would have been exhausted if they had lived till fifty, sixty or seventy years of age. The forces which they thus saved are added to those with which they incarnate in the next life. Thereby such souls are born into bodies through

which they are in a position, especially in their youth, to confront life with strong impressions. In other words: when such souls, who in their last incarnation died before the thirty-fifth year, reincarnate again, everything makes a strong impression on them. They are deeply stirred by things, they enjoy things deeply, they have living feelings and are easily urged to impulses of will. They are those who take a strong position in life, and who receive a mission. A man does not die without cause before his thirty-fifth year; he will thereby receive a quite definite mission in his next life. These things are complex, and death before the age of thirty-five may also bring about other things — it is not absolute law, for these are only examples. But when a man dies after thirty-five it happens that in his next life he does not receive such strong impressions from the things in his surroundings. He cannot easily be stirred or roused. He becomes acquainted more slowly but more intimately with things, and he thus prepares himself for a life in his next incarnation in which he will work more through his inner nature, without being so definitely guided to a special task in life. He will so stand in life, that he would perhaps have preferred some other task, and is diverted from it in order to accomplish something perhaps absolutely against his will. Because through the previous earth incarnation he had accustomed himself to work more delicately, he can now be used in a wider sphere. And if a man — I have already mentioned this case earlier — if a man is led in very early youth through the gate of death, let us say in his eleventh, twelfth, or thirteenth year of life, he then has but a short time in Kamaloka. But he remains very, very near the world which he forsook at physical birth. Everything appears different. After a life ending with the twelfth year, there follows the usual retrospect during the first days after death, but it takes place in such a manner that it appears more from outside. Whereas if a man dies at the age of fifty, sixty or seventy, he himself must do much more to bring about this retrospect. It must be brought about by his own activity. And because they have to experience this life after death in so many various ways, men are thereby differently prepared for their next life. It may be that in one life a man is especially active. Now, if an especially active man is summoned from life at an early age, it would then occur that in his next life his Karma would appoint him to a quite definite task in life, which he would certainly accomplish. He would be as if predestined. If, however, a man is especially active in one life and lives to a good old age, these forces are then intensified inwardly. He has then in his next life a more complicated task. Outer activity withdraws, and there appears in the soul the necessity to evolve inner activity.





## 5 Man's Different States after Death

Source: <https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/19060630p01.html>

*30 June 1906, Leipzig*

Yesterday I described the astral world. To-day we shall deal with man's life after death in the astral world. This will give us a basis for an understanding of reincarnation and karma.

We have seen that when we die the following processes take place: The physical body remains behind as a corpse; whereas during sleep the etheric body remains connected with physical body, the etheric body, the astral body and the Ego go out of the physical body at the moment of death. Immediately after death, the whole earthly life unfolds itself in every detail before the soul of the departed in the form of pictures. This process lasts for about three days, until the next separation, namely that of the etheric body from the astral body and the Ego. In the occult meaning we therefore speak of two corpses. After a while, the etheric body remains behind as a second corpse.

When the second separation has taken place, the capacity of memory ceases — but not for always — and a new condition begins for the human being. What is this new condition? Man now experiences himself in the world which he enters every night during sleep. But this after-death condition greatly differs from the sleeping condition. Theosophical books sometimes describe death as if it were a kind of sleep. But this is not the case; soon after death man grows conscious of the astral world. Nevertheless there exists in the proverb: Sleep is the brother of death. ... and this is justified. This new state of existence is called life in Kamaloca.

We have seen that during sleep the astral body works on the physical body and on the etheric body in order to renew their forces. This work suppresses consciousness during sleep and prevents us from having perceptions of the astral world. After death the astral body is dispensed from this work indeed no longer to restore fatigue, and for this reason it begins to grow conscious of the astral world. Upon the Earth, this force was used for the reconstruction of the physical body, but now it is free and

exists in the form of consciousness. When the astral body is no longer obliged to restore anything, it perceives the images of the astral world. This also shows you why we should strive after a sound sleep.

Observe physical life here in this world, how everyone seeks to satisfy his senses. What a human being enjoys, is enjoyed by his soul, but the organ which enables him to enjoy is physical. If a person enjoys eating, the soul needs the palate for its enjoyment. After death the longing for these enjoyments continues to exist, whereas the organs no longer exist. The soul yearns for good food, but the organ enabling it to taste it is lacking. The longing can no longer be satisfied. The soul is like a wanderer suffering terrible thirst looking in vain for water, for a possibility to quench his thirst.

This state of existence does not last forever, little by little the longings cease. Many religions describe it as a life in purgatory. And old painter sometimes depicted in other pictures with flames of fire. In fact, the soul suffers a burning thirst.

The further courses is that the human being feels his last longings and lives through his whole life backwards, as far as his birth; when he had no passionate longings. Afterwards man enters Devachan. **This is clearly indicated in the Gospel verse: unless ye become like little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God.** — Little by little the human being must free himself from everything which linked him up with the physical world. Kamaloca is the condition in which he emancipates himself from everything which chains him to the world of the senses. It is influenced entirely by the sensory life in the physical world. If a person entirely submitted to his senses, his life in Kamaloca will be long and difficult. Ordinarily the Kamaloca-existence takes up about one third of the duration of earthly life. Past life rises up before the soul in the form of images and beings that torment us. In Kamaloca everything is reversed: what used to satisfy us, is now want. Hot passion calls up the feeling of horrible chilling Beings. And the burning thirst remains throughout. The more a human being freed himself from physical life before death and the easier his death, the more readily will he disaccustom himself to the world of the senses. In the case of suicides this will be most difficult of all, for they were the prey of an illusion: they do not consider that in violently severing themselves from the life of the senses, they will be seized by an unspeakable greed for their physical body, which would keep them in close proximity to the physical world. A similar fate — though in a weaker form awaits those who lost their life suddenly through some accident. Such a

sudden death also brings with it an avidity for the physical world, for the physical body, but later on this will be compensated in Devachan. When the soul has laid aside its earthly desires, it enters the Devachan state of existence.



## 6

# The Elemental World and the Heaven World

Source: <https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/19070526p01.html>

*26 May 1907, Munich*

We shall now study man in the state of waking life in the physical world, in the state of sleep and in so-called death. Everyone is familiar, from his own experience, with the waking state.

When the human being sinks into sleep, his astral body and ego, together with what has been worked upon in the astral body by the ego, withdraw from the physical and etheric bodies. When you observe the sleeping human being clairvoyantly, physical body and etheric body lie there in the bed. These two members remain connected whereas the astral body emerges together with the higher members; with clairvoyance we can see how, when sleep begins, the astral body, bathed in a kind of light, draws out of the other two bodies. To describe this condition with greater exactitude we must say that the astral body of modern man appears as if it consisted in many streams and sparkles of light and the whole appears like two intertwining spirals, as if there were two 6-figures, one of which vanishes into the physical body, while the other extends far out into the cosmos like the trail of a comet. Both these trails of the astral body very soon become invisible in their further extensions, so that the phenomenon then has an ovoid shape. When the human being wakes, the trail no longer extends into the cosmos and everything draws again into the etheric and physical bodies.

Dreaming is an intermediate condition between waking and sleeping. Sleep that is filled with dreams is a condition where the astral body has, it is true, loosened its whole connection with the physical body, but is still connected with the etheric body. Man's field of vision is then pervaded with the pictures we call dreams. This is, in very truth, an intermediate condition because the astral body has detached itself completely from the physical body, while remaining connected, in a certain way, with the etheric body.

The human being, while he is asleep, lives in his astral body outside his physical and etheric bodies. The fact that he must sink into sleep has deep significance for his whole make-up. Do not imagine that the astral body is inactive and has no work to do during the night while it is outside the physical and etheric bodies. During the day, when the astral body is within the physical and etheric bodies, influences come to it from the outside world, impressions which man receives as a result of the functioning of his own astral body, through his senses, through his activity in the physical world. Feelings and experiences, everything that works in upon him from outside continues on into the astral body. This constitutes the actual feeling and thinking part of man, and the physical body, together with the etheric body, is only the transmitter, the instrument. Thinking and willing take place in the astral body. While the human body is active in the external world during the day, the astral body is receiving impressions all the time. But let us remember, on the other hand, that the astral body is the builder of the etheric and physical bodies. Just as the physical body with all its organs has hardened out of the etheric body, so everything that streams and is active in the etheric body has been born out of the astral body.

Out of what is the astral body itself born? It is born out of the universal astral organism which weaves through the whole of the cosmos. If you want to envisage, by means of a simile, the relation of the small portion of astral substantiality contained in your astral body to the great astral ocean in which all human beings, animals, plants, minerals, and planets too, are contained and out of which they are born, if you want to envisage the relation of the human astral body to the great astral ocean, think of one drop of a liquid in a glass. The drop derives its existence entirely from the liquid in the glass. Similarly, what is contained in an astral body was once embraced within the astral ocean of the cosmos. It has separated out from this ocean and having passed into an etheric body and a physical body, has become a distinct entity, like the drop of liquid.

As long as the astral body lay within the astral ocean, it received its laws and its impressions from this cosmic source. It had its life within this cosmic astral body. After its separation it is exposed, during man's waking consciousness, to the impressions received from the physical world; so that it is divided between the influences coming from the cosmic astral body and those which it receives from outside as the result of the activity imposed upon it by the physical world. When man has reached the goal of his earth-evolution, this division, will merge into harmony. Today, these two kinds of influences do not harmonise.

Now the astral body is the builder of the etheric body and indirectly — because the etheric body is in turn the builder of the physical body — also of the physical body. Everything that the astral body has built up piece by piece through the ages has been born out of the great cosmic astral ocean. Because only harmonious and sound laws proceed from this astral ocean, the work carried out by the astral body in building the etheric and physical bodies is originally sound and harmonious; but as a result of the influences which came to the astral body from outside, from the physical world, impairing its original harmony, there arise all those disturbances of the physical body which prevail in mankind today.

If the astral body remained all the time within the human being, the strong influences of the physical world would soon destroy the harmony brought by the astral body from the cosmic ocean. The human being would very soon be spent by illness and exhaustion. During sleep the astral body withdraws from the impressions of the physical world, which contain nothing that produces harmony, and passes into the cosmic harmony from which it was born. And so in the morning it brings with it the lingering effects of the refreshment and renewal it has experienced during the night. Every night the astral body renews its harmony with the cosmic astral ocean and reveals itself to the clairvoyant as anything but inactive. The clairvoyant perceives a connection between the astral ocean and the one comet-like trail and observes how this part of the astral body works to eliminate the debility caused by the world of disharmony. This activity of the astral body expresses itself in the feeling of refreshed vigour in the morning. Having lived during the night within the great cosmic harmony, the astral body has of course again to adjust itself to the physical world; hence the feeling of greatest vigour does not arise until a few hours have elapsed after waking, when the astral body has again drawn into the physical body.

We will now turn to death, the "brother" of sleep, and study the condition of the human being after death. The difference between a man who is dead and one who is only sleeping is that at death the etheric body passes away together with the astral body and the physical body alone is left behind in the physical world. From birth until death the etheric body never leaves the physical body except during certain states of Initiation.

The period immediately following death is of great importance for the human being. It lasts for many hours, even days, during which the whole of the incarnation that is just over comes before the soul of the dead as in a great tableau of memories. This happens to every human being after

death. The peculiarity of this tableau is that as long as it remains in the form in which it appears immediately after death, all the subjective experiences of the man during his life are expunged.

Our experiences are always accompanied by feelings either of joy or pain, upliftment or sorrow, in other words our outer life is always associated with an inner life. The joys and sorrows connected with the pictures of the past life are not present in the memory-tableau. The human being confronts this memory-tableau as objectively as he confronts a painting; even if this painting depicts a man who is sorrowful or full of pain, we still look at him quite objectively; we can, it is true, discern his sorrow, but we do not experience it directly. So it is with these pictures immediately after death. The tableau widens out and in an astonishingly brief span of time man sees all the detailed events of his life.

Separation of the physical body from the etheric body during life can take place only in an initiate, but there are certain moments when the etheric body suddenly loosens from the physical body. This occurs when a man has had terrible experiences, for instance, a dreadful fall or has been in danger of drowning.— The shock causes a kind of loosening of the etheric body from the physical body and the consequence is that in such a moment the whole of the previous life stands before the soul like a memory-picture. This is analogous to the experience after death.

Partial separations of the etheric body also occur when a limb has "gone to sleep" as we say if a hand, for instance, has gone to sleep, the seer can perceive the etheric part of the hand protruding like a glove; parts of the etheric brain also protrude when a man is in a state of hypnosis. Because the etheric body is woven in the physical body in tiny, pinpoint formations, there arises in the physical body the well-known sensation of prickling in a limb that has gone to sleep.

After the lapse of the time during which the etheric body together with the astral body is emerging from the physical body after death, there comes the moment when the astral body, with the higher members, leaves the etheric body. The latter separates off and the memory-tableau fades away; but something of it remains; it is not wholly lost. What may be called ether- or life-substance dissipates in the cosmic ether, but a kind of essence remains and this can never be lost to the human being through his further journeyings. He bears this with him into all his future incarnations as a kind of extract from the life-tableau, even though he has no remembrance of it. Out of this extract is formed what is called, with



concrete reality, the "Causal Body." After every incarnation a new page is added to the Book of Life. This augments the life-essence and, if the past lives were fruitful, causes the next life to develop in the proper way. This is what causes a life to be rich or poor in talents, qualities and the like.

In order to understand the life of the astral body after its separation from the etheric body, we must consider the conditions obtaining in physical life. In physical life it is the astral body that is happy, suffers, satisfies its desires, impulses and wishes through the organs of the physical body; after death these physical instruments are no longer at its disposal. The epicure can no longer satisfy his desire for choice food because the tongue has passed away with the physical body; but the desires, being connected with the astral body, remain in the man and this gives rise to the "burning thirst" of the Kamaloca period. (Kama = desire, wish; "loca" is "place", but it is in reality a condition, not a place.) A man, who during physical life learns to transcend the physical body, shortens his time in Kamaloca.

To take delight in the beauty or harmony of things means growth and development, for this leads us beyond the material world. To delight in art that is materialistic increases the difficulties of the Kamaloca state, whereas delight in spiritual art lightens them. Every noble, spiritual delight shortens the time in Kamaloca. Already during earthly life we must break ourselves of pleasures and desires which can be satisfied only by the physical instrument. The period of Kamaloca is a time of the breaking of material pleasures and impulses. It lasts for approximately one third of the time of the earthly life. There is something singular about the experiences undergone in Kamaloca. The human being begins actually to live backwards through the whole of his past life. Immediately after death there was a memory-tableau devoid of the elements of joy and suffering; in Kamaloca the human being lives through all the joy and all the suffering again in such a way that he must experience in himself all the joy and the suffering he caused to others. This has nothing to do with the law of karma.

The journey backwards begins with the last event before death and proceeds at triple speed, to birth. When in this backward passage of remembrance the human being reaches his birth, the part of the astral body that has been transformed by the ego combines with the causal body and what has not been so transformed falls away like a shade, a phantom; this is the astral corpse of the human being. He has laid aside the physical

corpse and the etheric corpse and now the astral corpse. He now lives through new conditions: those of Devachan. Devachan is all around us, just as is the astral world.

When the life has been lived through backwards as far as earliest childhood, when the three corpses have been discarded, man reaches the condition mysteriously indicated in the Bible by the words: "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." (Devachan, the spiritual world — this is the Kingdom of Heaven in the Christian sense.)

The world of Devachan must now be traversed. It is a world as manifold and differentiated as our physical world. Just as solid regions, continents, are distinguished in the physical world, with an expanse of water surrounding the solid land, with the air above and above the air still finer conditions, so there is a similar differentiation in Devachan, in the spiritual world. By analogy with conditions on earth, the phenomena to be found in Devachan have been given similar names.

Firstly, there is a region which may be compared with solid, physical regions: it is the Continental region of Devachan. What is physical here on the earth is, in this region of Devachan, found to be a multitude of spiritual Beings. Think, for example, of a physical human being. To devachanic vision he appears like this: what the physical senses perceive, vanishes, and light flashes up in the sphere immediately around the physical man, where otherwise there is a void; in the middle, where the physical body is, there is an empty, shadowy space — like a kind of negative. Animals and human beings appear here in negative pictures; blood appears as green — its complementary colour. All formations which are physical in our world are present in the Archetypes of Devachan.

A second region — not separated off, but like a second stage — is the Oceanic region of Devachan. It is not water it is a particular substantiality which in rhythmic streams pervades the world of Devachan in colour that may be compared with that of young peach-blossom in Spring. It is fluidic life and it pervades the whole of Devachan. What is divided among individual human beings and animals here below is present in Devachan as a kind of watery element. We have a picture of it when we think of the diffusion of the blood in the human organism.

The third region of Devachan can best be characterised by saying that what lives here, in the physical world, within beings in the way of feelings, of happiness and suffering, joy, pain and the like, is present there in external manifestation.

To take an example. — Suppose a battle is waged here on the earth. Cannons, weapons and the like — these are all on the physical plane. But within human beings on the physical plane there are mutual feelings of revenge, pain, passions; the two armies confront one another full of opposing passions. Think of all this translated into external manifestation and you have a picture of how it appears on the devachanic plane. All that happens here on a battlefield, appears, in Devachan, like the bursting of a fearful storm. This is the atmosphere, the surrounding air of Devachan. Just as our earth is surrounded by air, so all the feelings that break out here, whether they come to physical expression or not, spread out in Devachan like an atmosphere.

The fourth region of Devachan contains the archetypal forms, the archetypal foundations of all truly original achievements on the earth. If we examine closely the happenings of the physical world, we find that the vast majority of inner processes are instigated from outside. A flower or an animal gives us joy; without the flower or the animal we should not experience this joy. But there are also processes which are not instigated from outside. A new idea, a work of art, a new machine — all these things bring into the world something that was not there before original creations come into being in all these domains. If new creations did not arise in the world, humanity would make no progress. Original creations given to the world by great artists and discoverers are only higher in the sense of degree than every other truly original act — even the most insignificant. The point is that something original arises in the inner being.

Archetypes exist in Devachan even for the most insignificant original actions; all these things are already prefigured in yonder world; any original achievement of a human being is already present in the germinal state, even before his birth.

Thus in Devachan we find four regions whose counter-images on the physical plane are Earth, Water, Air and Fire. There is the Continental region as the solid crust in Devachan—in the spiritual sense, of course; then the Oceanic region, corresponding to our area of water; the Atmospheric region, the streaming flow of passions and the like — beauty, but also tumult is to be found there. Finally, there is the all-pervading world of the

Archetypes. Everything in the way of initiatives of will and original ideas to which, later on, effect is given in the physical world by beings who return thither — all this must be lived through by the soul in yonder world in order that fresh power may be gathered for the new life.



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