CHAPTER III
THE MAKING OF A MYSTIC

That everyman is born with a soul, a mind and a body, is a very common notion. In this trio of human constitution the soul occupies a place at the highest point, indicative of its proximity to the source of creation. The physical body with all its sensations and baser emotions comprises the lower most part, embodying the down to earth elements in human nature. And finally, the mind or the intuition forms a very subtle cord of harmony between these two regions of human constitution — the higher and the lower. The human personality, though keenly absorbed in all the three segments, has its real identity contained in the soul, which being an indivisible part of the Divine Ray of Creation, bears reflection of the Mother of Creation too. The individual soul, since birth, has been set on a circular motion, which in the process of journey, accumulates experiences of slurs and blemishes till it again purges into purity and perfection, seeking final merger in the Divine Spirit. Thus, through numerous phases of intuitive experience
the psyche moves ever upward for fusion with the spring of creation, wherefrom it had been flung.

Sedimentation of wisdom into the psyche through successive births is the basic purpose of recurring incarnation upon earth. With each birth the soul gathers a certain amount of wisdom which forms a part of human nature and remains latent or active in the successive births. So each man, irrespective of his progress in the ladder of evolution, is born with some convictions, passed down to him through previous births; and they, with favourable conditions, may develop into a well-formed definite philosophy later in life. AE, in whom we have signs of such a unique personality, was born with certain philosophic convictions which ripened into a well-organised mystic-philosophy in his manhood.

Essentially AE was an Eastern-minded saint who, despite his involvement in politics
and journalism, rose above the level of personal well-being to maintain a life of practical mysticism. Though born in the Western part of the globe and had never stepped into the mystic riches of the Orient, AE had much to share with the Orientals, dealing with Eastern philosophy and occultism that unfolded a fountain of occult knowledge to his mind. As he read them, he whole-heartedly believed in the truth contained in them. To him it was as if some long-forgotten faith unfurled its wings before a soaring spirit. Gradually it became a part of his life's philosophy, a faith upon which he erected the entire set up of his idealism and visionary imagination. With great interest he read the Theosophical and other books on occultism, translated from Indian and other Oriental languages and therein he discovered the seeds of the mystery of life and death. Several Theosophical books which he had the privilege of studying in his youth, it seems, had a permanent imprint on his formative mind as they
later accreted into his own personal philosophy. Strangely enough, AE discovered an acute akinness of these Theosophical and Indian philosophies to his own conviction. Of the numerous doctrines and beliefs, a notion much appreciated and expressed on different occasions by AE was regarding the operation of causal-relationship in the universe. The Hindu philosophy calls it Karma, showing the inevitability of Karmic sequence in the successive lives of man; and, the entire pattern of Theosophical teaching is based on the improvement of the present action in order to bring about a sublime future.

AE's view of human life, to some extent, is fashioned after a typically Indian outlook which is also dealt with elaborately in the Theosophy. Although he joined the Society (Theosophical Society) formally in 1888-89, he had previously been fascinated by the teaching of Madame H.P. Blavatsky on the applicability of cosmic justice to human action. Besides Theosophy and Hinduism, the Buddhist path of self-renunciation
too had a lasting impact on him. As he came into the Theosophical circle, particularly the Esoteric section, the implications of various Eastern philosophies became clearer to him and his probe into the complexities of human destiny became deeper still.

The teachings of the Theosophy as well as the ancient Indian religions agree on the cyclic motion of human soul through time. The Bhagavad Gita holds the soul (atman) to be a ray of energy from the fount of the Immortal Energy, which, coming down to earth, assumes a physical body with a mind that errs and expiates in its course till it is purged thoroughly to rejoin the Almighty. The Upanishads, which cradled the whole of Hindu philosophy, present a duality in the nature of the soul, i.e., the supreme soul and the individual soul. This duality in the nature of the soul, however, is not a two-fold manifestation in reality. Whereas the true essence of the soul lies in its unity and indivisibility, the double identification is merely apparent. The spark which emerged from the source is not different from the source. The
Hindus identify the source of creation with 'Brahman' — the first principle who creates the universe and manifests therein his own spirit in form of individual soul (jiva atma). According to the oldest of the Upanishads and the Rigveda, the 'Brahman' is both the 'being' and the 'non-being' who creates and manifests, who moves and is moved, who, in other words, is a self-procreative power in the universe. The individual soul, emerging from that Brahman, operates in the world, making a free-play of the 'will' and thereby getting entangled by the fruits of the will. This aspect of the Hindu philosophy seems to have fascinated AE a lot. He regarded his own life as a part of the Divine energy, and seeing its fruition in the merger in the Supreme Soul, devoted his will to a path of love and self-sacrifice which were the only way to redemption from material bondage.

The Theosophy analyses human constitution on a seven-fold classification. In Hme. Blavatsky's septenary constitution of man one gets an account of the soul's evolution through the seven stages,
commonly known as the 'seven principles of man':

1. The physical Body
2. Vitality
3. Astral Body/Etheric Body
4. Animal Soul
5. Human Soul
6. Spiritual Soul, and
7. The Spirit.

Of these seven stages the spiritual evolutionary change in normal human being takes place only up to the level of human Soul, whereas the rest lie latent and dormant till the individual reaches a very high point of evolution. In this classification, only the grossermost form, i.e. the physical body, is in the physical plane, attributed with all the material elements. With death, the soul is delinked from the physical body and takes to the next form, the 'vitality', where it continues again for a period of time. A.P. Sinnett in Esoteric Buddhism, discussing the nature and constitution of the Trinity of Spirit (Human Soul, Spiritual Soul, and Spirit) comes to the conclusion that the human and spiritual soul are still in an undeveloped stage in the present evolutionary cycle. Hence, in the present cycle the 'Higher Triad' of human nature, being mostly in a dormant condition, cannot be affected by the
evolution of the 'lower quarternary'. As per this analysis, though the identity of man is said to be in the conglomeration of all the seven conditions, the four lower constituents form the transient instrumental for the evolution of the spirit whereas the higher triad, being deathless, bears the pith of human personality. Identifying man with the Immortal Spirit, William Quan Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy* says:

He is therefore called the Triad, or indestructible trinity, while they are known as the Quarternary or mortal four. (1)

Such theosophical interpretation regarding the nature and constitution of man has some resemblance to the Platonic Theory advocated earlier. According to the classification accepted by Plato and Pythagoras, the Soul had a 'neotic' and 'agnoia', corresponding to the eternal and transitory natures of the soul respectively. In man, as they say, both these parts are interdependable, and the spiritual
evolution passes from one state to another till the higher realms are reached. Thus we have an interlinked sequence of finer and and grosser bodies till we reach the level of Supreme Consciousness. Such classification by Plato, later found a clearer elucidation in what Theosophy accepts as the 'septenary constitution of man'.

It is likely that AE, who besides his access to the different branches of Indian scriptures had read the Platonic and Hermetic writings profusely, had been greatly influenced by the occultism of various theological doctrines of the world too. He was a believer in the Mighty Force or Order that made everything move in the universe. He viewed the entire process of life in the pattern of a flux, and found that "in all its flowings there was meaning and law". (2)

To him, this governing principle was the law of divine justice and cosmic retribution. This view of AE indirectly accounts for his unviolatable faith in action-oriented result
which he, at times, refers to as 'Karma' of the past life. It was a belief strongly indented in him that man only reaped what he had sown before and cannot demand what he had not deserved earlier. His future thus stands on the edifice of the past, unredeemable by any degree of penance or repentance.

AE holds the individual soul to be a spark from the Fountain of life or Eternity, which coming into the world at a mystic command, sets at work again to merge in its source. Thus he takes both the Mother Spirit and the wandering soul to be one and indivisible, though the latter has gone awry, deviating from its source. But it is bound to return and seek absolute merger in the Mother Spirit. This fountain of creativity, or, the manifesting logos, in AE's concept, is often identical to that of Brahma in Hindu mythology, or Krishna of the Bhagavad Gita who, in his own words, is described as an incarnating Beauty: "I am Beauty itself among beautiful things", who links the entire world in 'mystic brotherhood'.(5)
The 'mystic brotherhood' establishes in the universe a chain of intangible relationship between the source and the emanated ego which on earth is in a rotund journey. AE's Mother Creator is the sole motivator, mover and the controller of the entire manifested creation, just as 'Brahma' is the cause of expansion, growth and evolution — the cause of the causeless.

AE, in particular, was attracted by the mystery of the soul. In an article, published by the Orpheus press in 1911, AE wrote: "We came out of the Great Mother-Life for the purposes of soul."(4) This implies that it is upto the soul to use discrimination in order to follow the righteous path. The birth of the soul, the story of its revolt, subsequent sufferance and ultimate renunciation, which he had read in different tales and articles had convinced him of the merger in the Spirit to be the real purpose of the soul. Mabel Collins's (Mrs.Kenningale R.Cooke, 1851-1927) legend of the soul, The Idyll of the White Lotus, where the soul after many a distraction finally turns homeward, joyful, and
Jasper Niemand's 'Purposes of the soul', (The Path, Vol.V, 1890-91) where she describes the way of the soul in a mystic ordeal, had a lasting impact on AE's mind. Sena, in Mabel Collins's novel, represents the wandering soul, and the 'white lotus' symbolizes the spiritual potency. As the mundane and physical faculties evade the sight of the Logos from Sena's mind, he only gets glimpses of the Lady of the Lotus, who in reality is the true guiding spirit of the soul. AE very well understood the implication of the occult novel wherein he discovered the existence of the Spirit within the soul which "waited trembling for the finest touch, the shyest breathing of the Everlasting"(5) He was fully conscious of the spirituality of the soul as contrasted against the drab materialism of the body. Despite the ignorance of the physical body, he knew for certain that the guiding spirit was like the Lady of the Lotus, of which he wrote:
She sat with hands as if to bless,
And looked with grave, ethereal eyes;
Ensouled by ancient Quietness,
A gentle priestess of the Wise. (6)

AE's 'gentle priestess of the Wise' borrows much from the literary portrait of the Lady of the 'White Lotus' who, in the Legend, guides human soul till the lights of the Logos are visible and true wisdom comes flowing in.

H.P. Blavatsky in The Key to Theosophy describes human soul or the incarnating principle as an indestructible entity which passes unharmed through the cycles of life. According to theosophy, the ego, as it assumes a form of consciousness and matter in each birth, gets the varied experiences of life filtered into itself, the essence of which remains innate in the soul. As in ignorance the soul emerged from the Godhead, so in wisdom it would again travel back to its place of peace and repose. AE's personal philosophy speaks of his faith in the journey of the soul which, in spite of all its materialism and interest in mundane pleasures, would some time get rid and turn upward. The divine cord which holds the soul close to the Spirit is a common theme in the meditative
lyrics of AE. In his poem, 'Blindness' he realises the immortal link between the soul and the Spirit that makes him feel the presence of 'a mighty lover' who,

Takes every burning kiss we give:
His lights are those which round us hover:
For him alone our lives we live.(7)

Basically AE was a mystic, and though the mysteries of the occult world charmed him, he often found his mind to be drawing away from the splendid performances of the occult art. He rather felt more naturally drawn towards the mystic glory of Nature, and was always aware of his inner urge to reach the skirts of height, which he explains in 'Awakening':

The stars made him long, long,
To return to their light again.(8)

And, his soul eagerly responds to the call of the Nature,

O voices, I would go with you,
with you, away,
Facing once more the radiant gateways of the day;
With you, with you, what memories arise, and nigh
Sampling the crowded figures of the dawn go by,
Dread deities, the giant powers that warred on men
Grow tender brothers and gay children once again;
Fades every hate away before the Mother's breast
Where all the exiles of the heart return to rest.

As is conveyed through his poems, the human soul, having once been sent away from its original abode, gets the memory of the past effaced. As an opaque curtain drawn between hides the object from the sight, so also material consciousness, enwrapping the physical body and mind, forbids the memory of the origin wherefrom it emerged. Memory of the past lives in the present birth is thus kept away from the comprehension of human consciousness except in cases when through spiritual stimulation, the partitioning veil shrivels, making efforts to awaken the slumbering soul to the light of spirituality. Such state of the soul is thus described by AE:
Here in these shades the Ancient
knows itself, the Soul,
And out of slumber waking starts
unto the goal.(10)

The 'Ancient' in the poem is the indestructible
entity, the store of wisdom, which presents itself
in a living form in each incarnation. The theosophy
claims it to be the essence of the reincarnating
ego, and Krishna in *The Bhagavad Gita* describes it
to be a deathless spark, immutable and ceaseless.
In Russell's philosophy, this is the hidden self, the real identity which, not being perceptible to
our limited knowledge of consciousness, is beyond
the body and mind and hence beyond mortal
comprehension. Behind this outlook of AE, there is
very probably the spiritual background of two
philosophic writings: Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Song
Celestial* and Ms. Niemand's 'The Purposes of the
Soul'. In his translation of *The Bhagavad Gita*,
Sir Arnold quotes the words of Lord Krishna, in
reply to Arjuna's apparent hesitation on the
battle field:
Life is, spreading life through all;
It cannot anywhere, by any means,
Be anywise diminished, stayed,
or changed.
But for these fleeting frames which
it informs
With spirit deathless, endless, infinite,
They perish.(11)

The other work, which had a still more
lasting impression on AE, was the article of
the American Theosophist, Ms. Jasper Niemand who
likewise describes the individual soul to be a
fine ray from the One Ray multiplied.

Through the countless rays proceeds
the Life-Ray, the One, like a thread
through many jewels. This Ray is
the Mystery.
Further she says,
it is the Knower; it swallows up
the merely human consciousness and
sets itself on high, the Great Jewel
of Wisdom.(12)

Both the writings induced in AE a conviction
that the individual ego and the Divine Nature
(Supreme Being) though apparently different and
superficially detached from each other, in
essence, are one and the same, or one contained
in the other. The mystery of the matter and the spirit or the body and the soul is not only an inevitable part of Hindu philosophy and Theosophy but also it forms the foundation of the Buddhist doctrine of self-renunciation. The entire pattern of selfless action and complete renunciation in Buddhism rises from the basic principle of duality of soul and flesh, spirit and body. In the *Esoteric Buddhism* A.P. Sinnett, trying to excogitate the essence of Buddhistic philosophy, explains the Buddhist Nirvana to be a state, identical to total self-annihilation by effect of which the so-called duality merges in the sole identity of the soul, i.e. the Spirit. In another context quoting Mr. Arthur Lillie from *Buddha and Early Buddhism* he again points out one of the most fundamental principles of the Buddhist preaching:

He represents to himself, in thought, another body created from this material body—a body with a form, members, and organs. This body, in relation to the material body is like the sword and the scabbard; or a serpent issuing from a basket in which it is confined.(13)
In AE's 'Two Voices' we find a similar kind of treatment given to the relationship between the body and the soul. The manner in which the body and the soul converse in the poem, is very likely patterned after the much-discussed nature of the perishable frame and the perennial spirit of the human being as found in the Hindu Schools of thought. In 'Two Voices' the body of flesh and matter starts at its own plight, "This that is left: O, is it I?" for, it realises that the inner-being, disrobed, is "so pale a thing?"(14)

In the poem AE contrasts the charmless vehicle of the body to the luminous, ever alert soul which, having its seat within the physical frame, assimilates the wisdom through human births and prepares to unite with the Great Being. Poems like 'Earth Bound' (Enchantment and other poems, page-25), 'Resurrection' (Voices of Stones, p-10-11) and 'A Woman's Voice' (Earth Breath and other poems, p-24) throw light on Russell's concept of soul and Spirit, showing clear indications of his
affinity to the theosophic and Oriental philosophies.

AE's indebtedness to Indian thought is much deeper than what some of his eminent critics have presumed. Aodh de Blacam, tracing the poet's connection with the Eastern philosophies, wrote after his death in Sept. 1935,

Never in AE's writings or talk did there appear any deeper or more useful knowledge of the Orient than one might get from a few shilling volumes in popular libraries; it all came down to a dozen aphorisms which gave an exotic flavour to what he said. (15)

Here, the critic was terribly mistaken, totally misinterpreting and undermining AE's own saying regarding what he owed to the Oriental occultism and mysticism. If any influence, equally or even more powerfully is perceptible in AE than the Anglo-Irish, it was the Indian. From the Indian religious doctrines he learnt of those philosophical truths which played an important role in modulating his partly-formed
dogmas into convictions. We have evidence to the fact, when AE himself expressed his gratitude to the Oriental literature, which he prised above the Gaelic, or the English:

I was perhaps the least Irish in thought when I was a boy, because when I was very young I began to read Eastern literature and for almost ten years read little else...... I began when I was a little older to study the Gaelic literature, but I am afraid it was too late to get into my bones as with other Irish writers.(16)

This is a statement by AE which should, on no account, be taken lightly. This is exactly what the mystic had felt about the foundation of his own moral principle. As from the Hindu philosophy he learnt about the immortality of the soul, from the Islamic mysticism he learnt of the Sufi's path of enlightenment through oneness of consciousness. The Islamic mysticism, which in essence is not different from the Hindu or Christian mysticism,
is based on a unitarian philosophy. The Sufi
preaches, as did St. Paul, the father of early
Christian Church, the idea of union with the
Absolute through apprehension of divinity within
the self. He regards 'existence' not as separate
from God, who is both being and non-being. What
attracted AE most to Sufism was its path of
spiritual ascension by transcendentalism, a means
of diluting the barrier between the individual
and God.

As is seen, AE takes a very characteristic
view of the Orientalists regarding the relation
between the body and the soul. In the "Earth
Bound" (Enchantment and other Poems, page-25) he
feels the eagerness of the soul to rise to
perfection and purity:

Then body grew a-weary
And leaned to soul in tears;
But the soul was dreaming over
The folly of young years.(17)

The quatrains itself poses a problem
regarding the duality of human nature and the
consequent conquest of the soul over the body.
The solution to this metaphysical question, which tends to be an Oriental one is contained in the comforting words of Krishna in the Gita:

"Yea! in its bodily prison! — Spirit pure,

Spirit supreme; surveying, governing,
Guarding, possessing; Lord and Master still

PURUSHA, Ultimate, One Soul with me." (18)

William Q. Judge in his version of The Bhagavad Gita describes this ultimate 'power' as the Knower which sustains through the universe as well as the life process operating in it. It, being present in the individual self, links it up with the Divine Self. And, through the power of the Knower the lower or the inferior self can have a knowledge of the Superior.

To AE, W.Q. Judge was not a mere Theosophist, but his spiritual mentor. In Judge's writings AE discovered the tremendous spiritual potent which he felt to have flowed into his own veins. Full of praises for this Theosophist, he wrote to Israel Regardie, in 1932:
Judge was the most impressive man I ever met, not by any air of dignity but simply from what he was. (19)

His impression about Judge was not framed in his late manhood. Even, in early manhood he had the same reverence and regards for this man which he kept up till the end. As early as 1894, he wrote to Carrie Rea, how much he cared for Mr. Judge; and that, compared to other philosophers, he had more reverence for this wisest and sweetest man. (Letter from AE, ed by Alan Denson, p-14).

W.Q. Judge had been much fascinated by the occult interpretations of the Gita and the Upanishads, and he, like many other brother Theosophists, estimated these scriptures to have borne many a mystic revelation: that a man ought to realise. In their interpretations of the scriptures and exposition of philosophical doctrines, Judge and Russell have much to share. As Judge interprets the battle of the Kurukhetra to be a spiritual battle between the lower self and the higher self (Kauravas and the Pandavan), AE dramatizes the battle between the soul and the
body in 'Glory and Shadow' (Earth Breath and Other Poems, p.60-62). In the poem, 'Shadow' keeps its cognance in the abyss, and 'Glory' invokes it to the grandeur of the past. 'Shadow' is the doubting voice, confused in the life's battle and 'Glory' is the trumpet that blows, the light that shows the path. Arousing the dormant to its past splendour and forgotten might, the soul pours in words of courage and comfort to the being:

Why tremble and weep now,
Whom stars once obeyed?
Come forth to the deep now
And be not afraid.(20)

But the voice of the flesh (body), in contrast to that of the Spirit (higher self) is frivolous and faltering:

My footsteps are tied to
The heath and the stone:
My thoughts earth-allied-to,
Ah, leave me alone.(21)

The conversational tone of the poem, the quivering thoughts of the body, the self-confidence of the soul—all remind of a similar situation
presented in The Song Celestial, where Sir Arnold glorifies the Supreme, following a battle between the higher and the lower self. In the closing stanza of 'Glory and Shadow', 'Glory' leaves a great source of hope and faith to 'Shadow', saying:

> My power I surrender;
> To thee it is due.
> Come forth! for the splendour
> Is waiting for you. (22)

The underlying thought in the poem, possibly, is drawn from what Arjuna perceived in Sri Krishna in The Song Celestial:

> All this universe enfold
> All its huge diversity
> Into one vast shape, and be
> Visible, and viewed, and blended
> In one Body — (23)

Analysing the nature of the Divine Being, Judge says that the Supreme is present in every human being, and that, He is different from the various deities, gods and supernatural forms that men worship.
The Mother Deity or the Supreme Self, thus, is not a media for attainment of the object of interest. The deities have their limits, their birth and death, as are the rest of the things in the world. In contrast, the God, the Supreme, the Imperishable is not conceivable in form or matter to the imperfect human perception. Charles Johnston, in his translation of the Bhagavad Gita, writes of this unconceivable magnanimity of the Great Self (Krishna),

this whole world recognizes not me, who am above them, everlasting (24)

and,
Nor am I visible to all, wrapt in my magical Glamour;
This world deluded recognizes Me not, unborn, everlasting (25)

Besides Hinduism the Sufi cult too holds an identical view in telling that the God of mystic is independent of the gods of religion. The Sufi differs from the early Moslem ascetic in the sense that whereas the latter perceives the only god in Allah, the former upholds the God of mysticism above the god of dogmatic
scriptures. The Sufi obeys only one Spirit in which he sees the union of all the ethical principles and religions of the world. He believes it is foolish to arrest Him in the clutches of religious authorities, for He is all-pervading and all-absorbing. The famous Persian Sufi, Jami (Nur Al-din Al-Rahman, 1414-1492) describes the concept as:

All was One, there was no duality, no pretence of 'mine' or 'thine'.
The vast orb of Heaven, with its myriad incomings and outgoings, was concealed in a single point. (26)

Recognition of the Self within the self, thus, is the central theme, both of the Sufi and Hindu mysticism. In his shorter lyrics, AE too is seen to be tracing the place of this hidden self within. Much like the thoughts expounded by the Indian seers, he too evinces the Creator as an 'Unknown Archer' ('Sung on a Byway', Nuts of knowledge, page-20) from whose bow has sprung this entire creation. But, there is a barrier between the Archer and the arrow, which forbids communion in between.
This barrier, or the lapse is the 'Illusion' in the Universe. The Hindu philosophy calls it the *Maya*, by the effect of which there is an eternal chain of chase and flight. Entrapped by the illusory existence, the creature (man) flees from the goal, and, not seeing the futility of materialism, droops in it. Answering a question on the nature of the Universe, H.P. Blavatsky in *The Key to Theosophy* wrote:

No one creates it. Science would call the process of *evolution*, the pre-Christian philosophers and the Orientalists call it emanation; we, Occultists and Theosophists, see in it the only universal and eternal 'reality' casting a periodical reflection of 'itself' on the infinite Spatial depths. This reflection, which you regard as the objective 'material' universe, we consider as a temporary 'illusion' and nothing else. That alone which is eternal is 'real'.(27)

As per this analysis, man's apparent identity, which changes with each birth, is a part of the illusion, and therefore, not real.
The only part of human character that is 'real' and 'eternal', is the soul, which the frame (body) contains. It is imperishable in contrast to the perishable body. This vision of unreality or transitory existence, generally recognised by the Hindu philosophers are Maya, finds a mystic treatment in the poems of AE. Both Madame Blavatsky's doctrine of the unreal world and the Indian system of the illusory living had influenced AE in his philosophic exposition. He had been so much fascinated by the doctrine of Maya that he went even to the extent of using the term in one of his poems named 'The Veils of Maya'. In the poem he describes the illusory veil to be "some lesser glow" in the Mother, which, displaying its charm upon the world deludes the 'Real' from the individual. In 'The veils of Maya' the poet deeply feels the plight of the individual who gets lost in the world of temporariness, and therefore says:

Charmed by some lesser glow in thee,
Our hearts beat not within thy heart. (28)
The real pursuit of man, according to the poet, ought to be the identification of individual essence in the spell of illusory existence.

Such philosophic outlook in AE seems to bear a keen resemblance to the doctrine of Maya in the Hindu philosophy. The concept of Maya in Hinduism has a very old tradition beginning with the Rigveda, where it means something beyond mere illusion. Being created by Brahma, it is as powerful as the creation itself. Though elusive, changing and temporary, it has the might to capture the mind and to evade it from the knowledge of the changeless, the permanent and the real. Its working being incomprehensible to human being it enwraps the entire creation. And, it is only the wise and the seer who can do away with the camouflage.

Sankara (788-820 A.D., an advocate of the 'Advaita Vedanta') and his followers look upon Maya as a creative force, a mysterious principle, which hides the object from the perceiver. It,
therefore, connotes false egoism and false attachment engendering separateness. The panoramic myth of the Maya can be got over by abjuration of apparent glamour, or. by looking into the inner being where the vision of God is distinct. AE's handling of the Hindu doctrine is brilliantly developed in some of his stories collected in Imaginations and Reveries. In one such story, 'The Cave of Lilith' — initially published in The Irish Theosophist, February 1894 — he endeavours to present the theme of Maya in a Gaelic structure. In the story he depicts Lilith, the enchantress, exactly after the image of Maya. Both being female characters and endowed with the power to delude even the wisest of the seers, cast their charm upon the whole of mankind. In AE's story, she boasts with vanity:

I offer the good and the bad indifferently. The lover, the poet, the mystic, and all who would drink of the first fountain, I delude with my mirage. (29)

The plight of man in the world is that of the 'Sad Singer' over whom Lilith has full command, the only redemption of the enchantment being left
in patient submission and genuine inclination to see the real nature of God.

The great upland mystic, Lao Tzu (pronounced as Laocius) too, advocates a like principle regarding the one Unknown Reality, which is deplorably ignored by the entities, moving in the unreal world. Yet, says he in Tao Teh Ching, the real personality of man lies in this Spirit that forms the essence of the Nature, and he who has looked for this divine, eternal glow within himself, is the master of life. Such aspect of the Tao philosophy had fascinated AE, in whose appraisal he once told Mr. Blacan:

A master among the Taoists declares that when any soul is properly truthful, it becomes a focus of light to all men. (30)

The fact that knowledge of the 'Ancient' within the self is the purpose of life, and that this knowledge is not obtainable without the needful spiritual evolution of the psyche, confirm the ever-upward journey of the soul.
The spiritual journey of the soul consists of various births and incarnations which are meant only for tearing off the illusory perception from human sight through wisdom based on experience.

The verity of rebirth or reincarnation is a topic of much debate in the West, but the Orientalists, and particularly the Theosophists have conveyed little doubt over the plausibility of life after death. The Westerner's apparent reasoning against rebirth is only due to the limitation of human memory which in normal case does not go beyond the span of present consciousness. The soul becomes imbued with the experiences which it gathers in the course of numerous births. Hence, with each birth, when the lower self (i.e., the body and the lower mind) is in action, memory of the previous experiences of the ego cannot be recapitulated. Eusebio Urban, in an article published in The Path ("Remembering the experiences of the Ego", The Path, Vol-V, 1890) compares the relation of the present life and the past lives with that of the
waking state and the dreaming state. As he explains in the article, the experiences of the Ego are not accessible to man because the key language of communication is missing in the physical consciousness.

AE too, holding a similar view that the physical consciousness is a handicap, says an iron will has fixed the bars:

Forgetfulness falls on earth's myriad races;

No image of the proud and morning stars

Looks at us from their faces. (31)

But, he provides a remedy to undo this spiritual handicap, which, in The Candle of Vision, he explains as:

We soon grow to think our memory but a portion of that eternal memory and that we in our lives are gathering an innumerable experience for a mightier being than our own. The more vividly we see with the inner eye the more swiftly do we come to this conviction. (32)
It is obvious that AE was in full support for the belief that within the corporeal frame lies the ethereal being, which remains out of its comprehension. Since he had little doubt about rebirth he readily accepted the concerning views offered by the Theosophy. He read Theosophy not because many a dynamic intellect and seekers of truth advocated it, but chiefly because he saw the applicability of its teachings to the crisis of the actual life. AE was more of a practical Theosophist who paid more attention to the evolution of the soul than to mere acquisition of knowledge of the supra-scientific concept. In a very self-analytic letter to Mme H.P. Blavatsky he questions the scope and purpose of the society, confiding frankly to her,

I recognise the essentiality of establishing the scientific basis of Theosophy, of studying it from all sides. I do not wish to be merely a metaphysical mystic.

A little later, he continues again,
My ideal is to worship the One God in spirit and in truth. (33)

The 'One God', according to him, is the inner being, the true self which, being cast in a self-assessable process, manifests upon earth again and again till perfect purity is granted. The theory of karma of the Hindu doctrine, the retributive principle of the Buddhism, and the law of flux and mutation of the Taoism, had all convinced him of the truth about the continuous appearance of individual ego on earth. Besides these, W.Q. Judge's *The Ocean of Theosophy* had deeply influenced him in this respect. Judge, in the book, strongly supporting grounds for the resurrection of the incarnating ego — a theory equally strong in the Christian and the Jewish religions — moves on to establish the doctrine of reincarnation in the Theosophy. He illustrates further in the book that the higher triad corresponds to the 'Heavenly Man' of the Jewish teaching as well as to the theory of pre-existence as expounded by eminent Christians like St. Paul, Origen and Synesius.
AE's sincere devotion to Indian and other Oriental mystic literature helped him to discover the mystic alliance which links him with mystics of the Eastern countries. His letter to Clifford Bax in 1905 gives a candid declaration to this effect:

"I read hardly anything else for years when I was young but Eastern literature and I have never since been able to enjoy the literature of Europe." (34)

Moreover, of all the Eastern philosophies that fascinated him in particular, the most important perhaps was the Indian doctrine on occultism which, he said that he had, "grown naturally into" and must continue until he can see the True without a veil. (35) Though himself not an occultist he studied it deep to look beneath the veneer of apparent reality, to discover the spiritual potency of man.

Besides, there were also the spiritually exalted Sufi poetry, the deeply meditative chants of the Chinese Tao, and the Buddhist path of
blissful living. Peculiarly enough, like the 

Theosophy, all these mystical philosophies had 
an implicit message of spiritual evolution 
through self-awakening, and thereby suggestive 
of succession of life. In a letter, written 
to Carrie Rea as early as 1866, he mentioned 
his own belief in existence prior to the present 
birth: "I remember slight fragments of my last!" (36). As he proclaimed, he believed to have 
lived as an Assyrian in that birth. He carried 
the conviction all through life and never showed 
signs of doubt or disbelief concerning his present 
mystic aptitude to be a justful remainder of the 
mystic inclination of his previous births. AE's 
remembrance of past life is not mere abstraction. 
With his advanced psychic perception and 
intuition, he could easily recollect things 

beyond normal human capacity. In The Candle of 
Vision he wrote how in childhood he could perceive 
luminous agents and far off things that his 
physical eyes could not see. Through psychic 
vision he could comprehend the divinity which 
displayed before him a vast store of unexplainable
beings and magical reveries, potent with mystic implications. In some of his early letters to W.B. Yeats he almost insisted on the existence of fairies which he claimed to have seen in the enchanted Silgo, and in Kilmasheogue. On another occasion, being sportively challenged by a companion, he immediately retorted, "I could begin seeing them if I wanted to". This vehemence seemed to his friend "almost a confession that they belonged to the world of imagination". But upon further consideration he concluded, "However fantastic these ideas may seem when crudely stated, they did not seem so fantastic when he explained them"(37)

Now, there is little doubt that AE possessed extra-perceptible power which the occultists term as clairvoyance, and clairaudience. Writing on AE's occult faculties, John Eglinton describes how he(AE) could stun people at times by narrating to them incidents of their private life, which AE could not have had the knowledge of. Although AE is known to have possessed such supra-natural faculties, he, for certain, has
never exploited them for occult purposes.
There is, however, evidence that he practised yogic methods in order to raise the 'serpent fire' (Kundalini) but soon refrained, knowing its terrible consequences when immaturely developed. In the chapter 'Power' in *The Candle of Vision* he describes the queer, unique feeling he underwent while evoking the fire through the spinal cord. It ran through his spinal cord like a lightning, shaking the entire body with its force. He felt like standing by a fountain of flame, feeling its extraordinary brightness scorching his entire being. Then slowly he began to feel its illumination on the brain, the candle upon the forehead, which stirred his divine vision making it a source of ecstatic and highly mystic creations. But simultaneously he seemed to grow aware of the perils of invoking the fire upon an unbridled body and mind and therefore abstained from the occult practice.

Coming back to AE's view on death and rebirth, it is essential to note that he always looked upon death of the physical body as a liberation of the spirit from the clutches of
of desires and sensations of the physical plane. He never feared death, for he knew that it gave deliverance to the soul which would again come back for further purification. Thus death, as he believed, hastened the process of evolution of the spirit. In this connection, he once wrote to Charles Weeks:

I believe I shall live hereafter because I have lived here before. I came upon knowledge of past religions, lives and loves in meditation and found others who knew the same things as I did and remembered the places where we lived. (38)

And, Madame Simone Terry remembers telling her:

I am convinced that I remember past lives, and I have spoken with friends who remembered them equally; we have even talked together of places where we live. (39)

All these hold evidence to Russell's belief in rebirth or consecutive births on the process of the soul's journey. In some of his shorter poems he compares each human birth to a day's journey
at the end of which the soul retires quiet and plaintive with the day's apparent failure ('Echoes', Collected Poems, p-14) As the "warmth of life quenches" the soul limps to a temporary recluse — the Devachana, the heaven, till it is prepared for yet another birth ('Answer', Collected Poems, p-17). This kind of faith (cyclic manifestation of the ego) in AE, apart from a Hindu influence can also hint at a Chinese mystic background which the poet always treasured in mind. Lao Tzu, whom AE read and admitted to have appreciated, takes cognition of continuous return to the root which, in other words, stands for the law of eternity. Lines from the Chinese gospel Tao Teh King read as,

Yet I can discern their cyclic return, because,

Renewal of life means in tune with the immutable.(40)

It upholds Tao, the great mover, as the spirit of such cyclic manifestation. The Tao is the Mother Deity, the Spirit, the fount of creation.
In ideas highly metaphysical it is explained as:

- Cyclical reversion is Tao's movement.
- Weakness is Tao's function.
- All things in the universe are derived from Being.
- Being is derived from Non-Being (41)

Though Lao Tzu has never referred directly to rebirth, on many an occasion, he speaks of a gradual progress of the soul which corresponds to the spiritual evolution of the psyche.

Dr. Isabella Mears, in her translation of the mystic gospel, puts the following lines to present the Taoist's version of renewing life and subsequent repose:

- Continuous return to the root is called repose, Repose is called the law of return, The Law of return is called eternity (42)

Taoism idealizes the union of the individual ego with the Supreme Ego, just as AE did it later. And, AE's godhead, Mother Nature or the Spirit, quite likely, has borrowed much from Lao Tzu's concept of the Tao, which, "appears to have existed before God" (43) just as AE says that the Spirit has an existence prior to creation. Both the eternal Tao and the Spirit of Nature (AE) are sources from which ensue the deities and individuals. Tao Tzu says,
The spirit of the valley dies not; it is called Mother-substance of the Deep. (44)

Very close to this thought, reads AE's:

Who is that goddess to whom men should pray,
But her from whom their hearts have turned away,
Out of whose virgin being they were born,
Whose mother nature they have named with scorn
Calling its holy substance common clay. (45)

In AE's treatment the Spirit is the revelation of the eternal life as well as the Mother Consciousness, which split into lives and consciousnesses. This Spirit is the enduring matter in the transient form and though these 'forms' decay and end, the Spirit lingers on till eternity. The Spirit, thus, is the awareness of the Infinity in the finite frame. By means of spiritual gravitation the soul seeks its affinity to the Spirit, and the soul is drawn ever higher for union with the Absolute.
The path leading to the union is one of purgation and purification through renunciation of attachment to the transitory. As *The Bhagavad Gita* is based on the nature of human action and the preachings of the Buddhism on the way to proper kind of action, similarly, the Tao philosophy deals with an analysis of human living. AE, who had been influenced by all the three schools of thought, extracted the key note of these philosophies, forming them into his own original doctrine.

AE penetrated into the Oriental mysticism more to find its kinness to his own conviction than to seek spiritual guidance from it. He devoted his entire life to the idealization of the spiritual quest which he understood to be an inner perception. With self-realisation and inward perception he could conquer the conflicts of life in the mental plane and therefore his concern with personal loss and sorrow was very little. He regarded life as a constant battle against sensational pleasure and enjoyment. It, he said,
necessiated passionless action and non-resistant willfulness to rise above worldly attachment. Like the great seers and yogis he too denounced personal struggle against destiny for, he believed that the smoothest and the easiest path to the attainment of spiritual grace was the path of non-attached action and selfless intention. Combat with Nature involved misdirection of volition and therefore led to further sufferance. In this respect both the Buddhistic self-renunciation and the Sufi's love had a great significance for the mystic-poet. The analysis of Buddhism, he read in The Esoteric Buddhism and The Buddhist Catechism, and Sir Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia opened a vista of profound wisdom through self-dedication; and AE, being a practical mystic, worked on making the path practicable. Although Sufism does not make direct allusion to causality, the underlying philosophy expounds renunciation as a way to higher wisdom and union with God. The Sufi seeks to follow the mystic path by total abstention from thought as well as action.
Since he regards God as the only reality against the absurdity of the mundane, by withdrawing selfhood, he joins individual consciousness with the consciousness of the Almighty. All the Sufi-poets, starting from Farid ud-Din Attar, Jalaluddin Rumi, Hafiz and Jami to the modern mystic Kahlil Gibran, reveal a universal attitude towards apprehension of the Supreme. Their thought of unitariness, however, is best presented by a 10th Century Sufi, Al-hallaj (Husein Ibn Mansur Al-Hallaj, 857-922 A.D.)

Betwixt me and Thee there lingers an... "it is I" that torments me. Ah, of Thy grace, take away this "I" from between us. (45)

Another Persian Sufi, Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-73) explains this mystery of unity under the veils of apparent duality. Attributing the concept of duality to the mental plane, he says:

To the form-worshipper they are two; when you have escaped from consciousness of form, they are One. (47)
The Moslem mystic, thus, proceeds from realisation of oneness of consciousness to abnegation of selfhood. Beginning with a notion that being a part of the Almighty, and therefore not complete in himself, he comes to the realisation that he ought not devote attention to the body which is not his own. Desires and passions that feed upon physical elements create hindrance to the vision of God and hence should be forsaken. The Sufi in his disposition to selfless living, thus, matches to a great extent with a true Buddhist.

Henry S. Olcott in *The Buddhist Catechism* says that 'Buddha' is not the name of an individual but that of a state, a condition where the mind of the individual reaches the acme of spiritual evolution, a fruition of development having full view of the Supreme Being. The term *Nirvana*, according to the Buddhists, is understood to be the salvation of the soul from the fetters of mortality and pain. The Buddhist monk strives to attain *Nirvana* to put an end to the laborious living
and torturous agonies of human incarnations.

He looks upon the Nirvanic state as one of perpetual rest, quiescent repose in the Omnipotent. But the path leading to this joyful state is one of tremendous will, selfless deed and thought, and annihilation of the base characteristics. Nirvana, if compared to life, is that condition which brings cessation to the process of mutation, desire and illusion wherefrom emerge misery, sufferance and ignorance—all that make up the 'physical' or 'material' elements in man. Lord Buddha himself stating the supremacy of the Nirvana to life of sufferings, says:

Let no man miss to render reverence
To those who lend him life, whereby come means
To live and die no more, but safe attain
Blissful Nirvana, if ye keep the Law,
Purging past wrongs and adding not thereto,
Complete in love and lovely charities. (48)

Since Nirvana is associated with the evolution and sanctity of the soul, and needs
an obliteration of the wrong deeds accumulated in previous lives, it is evident that the conditions of the present life are controlled and determined not by any unknown deity or god but by a self-caused principle, the karma. The Buddhists, Hindus and the Theosophists, all alike are firm on their conviction regarding the operation of karma in man's life. Since they regard life as transient as the wind and as meaningless as an empty-show, they see the futility of attaching their 'will' to material pursuits. Every effort to hold life is as futile as to hold the running stream with one's hand or order the cloud in the sky to obey and stay. Life is meant to slip and flee, not to be captured. The only way to lead a useful life is to learn the art of non-attached living which would render the life desireless.

The doctrine of karma is based on the causal relationship between the thought or action and the result. Buddhism explains it as,

each man's life
The outcome of his former living is;
The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes.
The bygone right breeds bliss.
This shows the interwoven structure of the past, present, and the future. Sri Krishna in *The Bhagavad Gita*, exhorting Arjuna to take up weapon in the battle of Kuruksetra, speaks of non-attached action which would ultimately invalidate the chain of recurring action in human life. Essaying the fifth chapter of the Gita, W. Q. Judge writes:

A very little reflection will show the student that the only result of action, as such, will be a continuation of action, and hence that no amount of mere works will in themselves confer nirvana or rest from karma. The only direct product of karma is karma.

But the best attempted explanation of *karma* can be found in Madame Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* where she explains its meaning and shows the validity of this 'Ultimate Law' in the universe. *Karma* is the unerring Law, she points out in the book.
Which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and Spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, karma is that unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable its action is perceivable.

There can be seen a clear parallelism between the nature of karma, elaborated by Buddhist and Theosophical writers and that by AE. In AE's philosophy karma plays a key-role in manipulating circumstances and sufferances in human life. Putting this law almost to an extreme form he says that every friend, enemy or relation one happens to come across in life is pre-ordained by the past action for action, good or bad, would invariably yield like consequences, sooner or later. This, according to AE, accounts for the very justful reward or retribution in the life of an individual. Various actions and their repercussions are the connecting factors that govern the nature of
human faith. Recognising its binding effect upon the soul, AE applied strong will to separate his life from the common flux. In this connection he wrote to Prof. Dowden:

To get free; to be able to rise from the region of dependent things into the self existent spiritual life is the first need of the mystic. (52).

Though AE was primarily a mystic, he had a definite interest in the occult field which taught him the importance of action without desire for any material profit. Adopting the method into his own philosophy, he was firmly convinced that any kind of action — whether noble or evil — would definitely twich the cord of the wheel of birth to draw the soul upon the earth once again. The only way, hence, to avoid the forthcoming incarnations on earth, was a complete refrainment of the will from any desirous action. Whereas action or motivated thought induces involvement with the world and the human beings, non-attached living weakens the bond with the earth, hastening the process
of evolution. Although it is not correct to say that AE's theory of causality has a direct descendance from that expounded in The Bhagavad Gita, still it is evident that in the Hindu method of karma he finds vindication of his own philosophy. The Indian scriptures had worked well at the background of his mind to furnish him with a lucid understanding of the operation of cosmic retribution in life just as the Sufi poetry encouraged him to travel on the way of love.

The Bhagavad Gita contains the core message of the famous Indian epic The Mahabharata. In the Gita, through the debate between Arjuna, the representative of individual monad and Krishna, the Logos, the hidden mysteries of human life are given an elucidated treatment. W.Q. Judge in his half-finished recension of the scripture, attempting an allegorical interpretation, describes the battle to be one between the lower self and the higher self. The battle of the Mahabharata, as he says, far from being a real one, is the tug-of-war between the
governing faculties of the lower being and the guiding spirit of the Higher self — the two forces between which the individual ego dwindles in ignorance. The veteran Indian Theosophist Subba Row, in another interpretation, deciphered the Arjuna-Krishna relationship as that of the wise soul, intending to resolve upon the noble path and the inner voice which illumines the higher mind of man. In both cases, however, the critics take note of the guiding principle in individual which leads the soul from ignorance to wisdom, from mortality to immortality.

AE looked upon the writers of the ancient scriptures — Hindu, Islamic or Chinese — with deep reverence, and believed them to have experienced the spiritual glory which they reported to others in genuine faith and sincerity. AE read their sacred books and treatises, and spoke frankly of the similarity his own theories on life bore to them. His love for the Eastern scriptures of wisdom can be traced from a quotation, which taking from the Upanishad he
wrote to Edward Dowden in 1894. "The soul is its own witness and its own refuge."(53) And twentyfour years later again he wrote in his spiritual auto-biography:

The soul makes for itself chariots and reads for chariots. There are no joys or rejoicings there. The soul makes for itself joys and rejoicings. For the spirit of man is creator.(54)

As he admitted, he took the concept from the Upanishads and formed it into his own doctrine. He built his own assessment of life upon a like notion:

"What a man thinks, that he is; that is the old secret". In this self conception lies the secret of life, the way of escape and return.(55)

AE's personal views regarding the connection of one's destiny to his past antecedents are streamlined after the Eastern philosophies. He strongly believes in the 'karmic' sequence which patterns and dominates the course of individual life. The action and its results are held in relation, akin to that of sowing and reaping of
crops, i.e., one inevitably following the other. In this respect attention may be drawn to an article on the operation of 'Karma' brought out in *The Path*, 1886 which AE very likely had gone through and had been influenced by. The article, quoting both from *The Light of Asia* and *Anugita*, proceeds to describe *Karma* as two-fold: the hidden and the manifest — the man as he is and his present action. It further states that both of them are interlinked; for *karma* produces manifestation of that which already exists and implies that present action ensues from the present circumstances turning it into a ceaseless chain of interdependence. Confining the working of *karma* to the mental plane, he attributes mind to be the creator of action, beyond which there is no action, therefore no *karma*. Mind is the seat of desire, and desire, the mother of thought and action. Thus, in the mind, desire gives birth to *karmic* result in human life, binding man to its net-like construction.

The article thus advocates desireless action which corroborates with action with
detachment of *The Bhagavad Gita*, the
annihilation of ambition of the Buddhist
ideology and the instructive ideation of
desirelessness, as propounded in *Light on
the path*.

In the very first chapter of *Light on
the Path* Mabel Collins gives a set of
disciplinary rules to the chosen disciples:

1. Kill out ambition.
2. Kill out desire of life.
3. Kill out desire of comfort. (56)

And, in her treatise on 'Karma' she
compares the karmic-chain to a rope of close-
knit thread which stretches from eternity to
eternity, allowing the minutest convulsion of
a single thread to affect the harmony of the
entire rope. Hence, the only way to stay
unaffected by karmic consequence, is to be
'karma-less', to be free from the desire of
doing anything for the benefit of the self.
It excludes also the 'desire' to create good
'karma', which arises from a secret desire for
reward.
AE regarded the religion or spiritual force, contained in *Light on the Path* to have much greater gravity than the entire philosophy of the *Old Testament*. This theosophical book (*Light on the Path*) which he read with great interest and earnestness confirmed his faith in the dynamic power of self-control and desireless living in promoting the soul to a blissful state in the higher planes, and, at the same time, getting it rid of the remanifesting principle. Attempting to explain the theory of causality further, AE elaborates the law of spiritual affinity which creates corresponding friends and environment for the individual just as Paul, his central character in *The Avatars*, impelled by spiritual gravitation, finds a way out of the congesting environment to join his spiritually close companions in a natural surrounding. The topic of spiritual gravitation is aptly discussed in the following question of Felim in the novel:
Were not we ourselves brought together by spiritual gravitation? You were born here. But what was it brought Paul or Mark or Gregor, or indeed most of those who are our spiritual kinsmen?(57)

Michael Conaire, to this question of Felim, gives a very intuitive answer that explains for the entire mystery of the Universe and the human soul in it:

I feel that in some secrecy of our being we are the choosers, that we willed what we have done. Even if the outer being finds itself outcast, in prison, hopeless or suffering, the inner spirit knew what wisdom or power it would have through undergoing just such things. The moment of willing our fate may be at the first out-breathing of the universe. Our, before we are reborn, we may, as Plato suggests, choose the circumstance of our lives. Or it may be, as the Indian seers hold, we go back every night, when we are beyond dream, to a state of spirit-waking, where for an instant we are truly ourselves and have communion with the gods.(58)
The theory of karmic affinity, in $A^3$
was not a late developed notion which he
spoke of in the <i>Avatara</i>, in 1933. Looking
back, in 1887-88, in a letter to Carrie Rea
he mentions of an identical theory:

Everyone with whom you are brought in
contact has some affinity for you and
you get just as much of their
companionship as you deserve. (59)

Again, in 1894, he repeated the same conviction:

Every person you meet is an affinity
of temper or thought. You were brought
near to that person by the Great Law. (60)

The 'Great Law' which holds the like things
together, creating situation for the evolution
of the soul, no doubt, is the law of cosmic
harmony. The law of spiritual affinity thus
leads the soul to rebirth and further
involvement with life. Mme. Blavatsky in
The Secret Doctrine, defying the Western
theological dogma pertaining to the creation
of a new soul with each human birth, says that
the individual monad, with assimilation of the
consecutive personalities, slowly proceeds
forward to the Absolute Deity. In order to
explain the theory of karmic reincarnation.

Mme. Blavatsky thus observes in *The Secret Doctrine*:

Intimately, or rather indissolubly, connected with *karma*, then, is the Law of Rebirth, or of the reincarnation of the same spiritual Individuality in a long, almost interminable series of personalities. (61)

The influence of *The Secret Doctrine* on AE is a question of little controversy. He is known to have read the book while working at the Pim's Departmental Store. H.F. Norman, tracing the origin of his philosophical conviction to Madame Blavatsky's great tomes *The Secret Doctrine, Isis Unveiled,* and *The Key to Theosophy,* points out how AE himself once avowed to the Dublin audience his indebtedness to these writings. ('The Vision of George Russell', H.F. Norman, *Ireland To-day,* No.12, Dec. 1937, p.75) Arthur Power, recollecting incidents in AE's life says:

Here, opening the *Secret Doctrine* on the desk before him he would read out a passage, and then start to expound it. (62)
Then since he had been attracted towards the mystical interpretations offered by H. P. Blavatsky on various topics. He seemed to have been contended with her argument on the limitedness of the 'Monads' in the universe which normally baffled the Western theologian. In his philosophic outlook AE was more Oriental than anything else. The doctrine of self-created destiny is described by him in words as clear as,

I, who sought on high for calm,
In the Everliving find
All I was in what I am,
Fierce with gentle intertwined. (63)

The self-creative power of human will is brought more explicitly out in 'The place of Rest', a poem where seeking comfort by total effacement of sinful deed, the soul starts at its goal. The soul, which has to 'go alone to the alone' can see the reality of its being only after it realises its own legend and purpose. As this realisation dawns upon man, he is given a life of repentance and sorrow — an experience identical to that created in 'Awakening':

a life of tears, tears,
He had won for himself that day (64)
The understanding that whatever done in the cosmic plane cannot be undone, led AE to opt for a life of patient acceptance of pain and suffering. Undue resistance to destiny gives rise to involvement, hence further pain; for, the destiny is already chalked out, unchangeable by any sort of repentance or revolt. It has already been in store for the individual which he must accept, willing or unwilling because, what he deserves is lawfully his and what is not his, he deserves not. Mention here may be made of The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam which AE read in early life. Beneath the so-called epicurean philosophy of the book AE noted the inevitability of the consequences of a thing done. The Persian poet says:

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line, Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it. (65)
This reveals the unchangeability of deed and thought. It further adds to AE’s conviction regarding a resistless acceptance of life, of which he says in *The Candle of Vision*:

> We may give up the outward personal struggle and ambition, and if we leave all to the Law all that is rightly ours will be paid. (66)

By this, however, he does not mean complete apathy or fatalism. What he means, on the other hand, is the righteous direction of the will in present birth, keeping in view the actual role of the ego in future lives. By giving up desire and ambition, the ego is let loose of the bondage of result-inducing action. The fifth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is based on the religion by renunciation of the result of work. In the chapter, Arjuna, confused with the duality between total renunciation of action and the service through righteous work, falls in a dilemma to discern the right form of action. But Krishna clarifies his doubt as,

> Controlling the powers and mind and thought, master of silence, bent on liberation, free from longing, fear and wrath, such a one is ever free. (67)
Because,

Who works, putting all works on the Eternal, giving up attachment, is not stained by sin, as the lotus leaf by water. (63)

This implies a life of action but not one of attachment. Fatalism is a notion abhorred by the mystics of Hindu philosophy. The Gita and the Upanishads advocate active endeavour and applicance of free will, for man, far from being an automation, is a self-creative process, who is what he thinks. While the receptive nature entangles him in the web of his own action, the creative nature, ingrained in the ego, spares him a range of free will to determine his own future. The proper guidance of the will, comments Ms. Jasper Niemand in *The purposes of the Soul*, can be achieved both through resignation and devotion. Whereas resignation is the first step to see the light of life, devotion makes the ground clear for the soul to gain concentration.

In Ms. Niemand's method of resignation I perceived a close likeness to what the Buddhist priests propagate as complete
dedication through self-abnegation. Their path is based on destruction of desire for attainment of Nirvana. In The Buddhist Catechism, Colonel Henry Olcott, discussing the salient features of the religion says that abstention of desire or selfhood from the will is the key to all wisdom. And, once the ego is rendered free from motivated thought or action, the wheel of birth is broken — the condition being one in which the soul remains in a state of ceaseless repose, and the ultimate liberation is attained. Hence the path, leading to this ever-blissful state, is one of resigned will, surrender of the ego to the Great Cause. This is the level which the 'Arahats' (Buddhist adepts) have reached. Their past deeds being worn out, and the new not being created, the store of past deeds is exhausted forever. They cross the limits of narrow egotism to enjoy their share in the Immortality. These mystics start with the annihilation of the self, which logically leads to the annihilation of desire and thirst of acquisition. This guiding
philosophy of the adept's life is beautifully brought about by Sir Edwin Arnold in the following words,

\[ \text{Say not "I am", "I was", or "I shall be".} \]
\[ \text{Think not ye pass from house to house of flesh like travellers, who remember and forget, Ill - lodge or well-lodge. (69)} \]

This throws light on two important aspects of the Buddhist philosophy: first, that man passes through more than one physical bodies (a statement confirming rebirth), and second, that attention to the ego is harmful. The 'I' or 'Mine' is particularly denounced by these philosophers; such terms yield attachment to life, fascination for material, non-permanent things which destroy the real purpose of the soul. 'Thigan' or 'egoism' or self-centred desire is called in Sanskrit and Pali respectively, is the first thing, a man should give up to ensure the evolution of the soul. In this self-created imprisonment of the soul, desire and hankering sow seeds which one day would bear fruits, good or bad. So the
ascetic, foregoing desirous will, gets the soul free from the fetters of illusory attachment. Hence the proper kind of renunciation is that in which there is not even desire for liberation of the soul.

The music of life which AE detected in Oriental philosophies was conspicuously absent in the Occidental. AE discovered the core message of the four great Oriental philosophies, the Buddhist, Tao, the Sufi and the Hindu, to be the purification of soul through truthful living. In all these forms of mystic apprehension, he saw the emphasis given to the spiritual evolution of the soul, and all of them believed in the law of flux in which individual soul is cast. They saw the possibility of the redemption of soul and making of the perfect Man through a path of willful renunciation.

The philosophy of voluntary renunciation played an important role in Russell's personal life too. He was of a calm, meditative and complacent temperament. Though he gave a major period of life to the promotion of national
spirit in the country and practically indulged in the problem of economic instability of the Irish peasants, he is little known to have combated personal misery. That he stood for the cause of his people, does not imply that he wanted to fight with individual destiny. It, on the other hand, speaks of his sacrificial attitude and profound love for his fellow-beings. In personal life AB showed every tendency to non-attachment and self-sacrifice. He was fascinated in particular by the Aryan way of living, in whose appreciation, he once said:

Now like a Brahmin after having begotten a son I retire again into a life of ascetic meditation. (70)

Russell's philosophy is notably acclaimed for its defenceless acceptance of the inevitable. He patiently bore all the dreads of life, and still loved life. He took life to be an opportunity to know one's own self and to make amendments for the future. He was highly optimistic about man's real position, not in this world, but in some enchanted land where the individual identity is outmarked by a universal soul. Russell is firmly convinced
that man had the full power to have, control
over his own future. "We are indeed most
miserable when we dream we have no power over
circumstance", wrote he in The Candle of
Vision, and that, the highest sort of wisdom
is,

to know this of the living universe
that there is no destiny in it other than
that we make for ourselves. (71)

Such philosophical doctrine had engendered
patient submission to pain and suffering in
Russell. He dissuaded himself from personal
strife because he knew for certain that, what
he deserved he ought to put up with. He was
a staunch believer in the doctrine of justful
retribution and regarded the failures and hostile
conditions of life to be means of wearing out
the evil-doings of the previous births. So, in
a way, he loved to go through the miseries and
difficulties, feeling happy that both patience
and sufferance would draw him nearer to the goal
which every seer heads for. Buddhism states that
desire begets sorrow, and AE, deeply moved by it,
made out a practical way just of the reverse
statement, sorrow expiates for desire. He advises that man must endure pain and suffering and look through them because they hold the mirror to the human personality which due to limited consciousness, man has forgotten. In *Hero in Man* he says,

> It is true that men have done wrong — hence their pain:(72)

Yet, at the same time 'Pain' is not to be shrivelled from for,

> There's way of escape through the Gate of Sorrow,
> A light at the end of the Path of Pain:(73)

In another poem, *Man to the Angel* (Earth Breath p-52) he repeats his conviction that pain leads to the purification of the soul. Man, triumphing over the Angel, proudly declares,

> All your beauty cannot win
> Truth we learn in pain and sighs(74)

There is an echo of self-satisfaction in this poem as it presents man with an opportunity of being purged by the tormenting grip of pain.
With contention he addresses the Angel:

Pure one, from your pride refrain:
Dark and lost amid the strife
I am myriad years of pain
Nearer to the fount of life (75)

Here, in spirit, AE is very near to the quintessence of Buddhism, as unfolded in the four Noble Truths:

1. Chain of birth is the consequence of renewed sins, and evil doings.
2. Desire yields misery.
3. Destruction of desire is detachment of the self.
4. Destruction of desire is obtainable through self-annihilation (76)

Besides, a good deal of Taoism is also based on this desireless living. Lao Tsu holds the life-process to be one, unbroken stream. In the famous mystic scripture Tao-Teh-King, he speaks of the necessity of a life above sensation and desire, that would induce in man, a rare gift of self-discrimination. He holds desire and material ambition to be the path leading to deceit and death. One of the central issues in
Tao-Teh-King is the unity or harmony in mankind which expulsates personal identity. The mind, overridden by the force of selfish desire, unable to perceive the unity in diversity, considers himself as other than the rest. In the Tao it is read as, "Truly, a cart is more than the sum of its parts". (77) And, Isabella Nears, translating the idea from the original Chinese verse writes,

That is why prince, and people call themselves orphans,  
Solitary men, chariots without wheels (78)

The ideal Taoist does not distinguish himself from the rest of the humanity. Inside he feels his own responsibility in working for the cause of mankind. Taoism preaches both non-attachment and non-action. As in The Bhagavad Gita or the Buddhistic sermons, Lao Tzu's non-action too is a kind of non-involved action where the mind is not interested in gaining self-promoting results.

Since AE loved to go through the experiences of pain and sorrow, death did not
mean to him a bed of ceaseless fear and torment. He regarded death as something which delivered the soul off its bondage of materialism. Man, being composed of various elements, would again go back to their respective sources, i.e. one part to the earth, one to the illusion of Heaven, another to the Deity and yet another to the fairy or elemental sphere, wherefrom they would be joined again for the next incarnation. To the Theosophists, death makes way for another stage in the evolution of the soul; to the Hindu, death ensures yet another birth; and, for the Buddhist, it is a string that makes the series of human incarnations a continuous, interlinked and interdependable chain. Considering 'death' in all these aspects, AE writes in 'Farewell' (The House of the Titan):

So many times my spirit went
This dark transfiguring way,
Nor ever knew what dying meant,
Deep night or a new day.

So many times it went and came,
Deeper than thought it knows
Unto what majesty of flame
In what wide heaven it goes. (79)
It follows from the poem that 'death' is a portal to eternity and heaven. Through his faith in rebirth AE sees the charms of death which mean the end of one birth, and hence that the soul has gained more wisdom through experiences of that birth.

Besides AE's access into the various Indian, Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, Celtic and Gnostic doctrines which clearly give evidence to their faith in rebirth, Evans Wentz's The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries most likely had a lasting impression on him. By the time he came across this book he had already plunged deep into the quest of metaphysical problems of life, and the book opened before him a vast field of knowledge and documents which ensured his faith in rebirth further still. Evans Wentz, in his book, narrating the doctrine of reincarnation that prevailed in the ancient Irish cult, established the reincarnation of divine personalities of the Irish 'Sidhe'. The comparative study of the cases of mythological reincarnation in Celtic
(i.e. King Morgan of Ulster, Tuatha De Danann, Dermot and Tuan) and their non-Celtic counterparts, promoted a firm conviction in Russell's mind regarding the verity about rebirth. Besides the Celtic system, he saw glimpses of occult truth in the Bardic theory which, giving full details of the stages of evolution puts human life in, to quote Wentz, a state of liberty, where man can attach himself to either good or evil, as he pleases. (80)

To AE, the question of free will in life, is contained in this. As the ground for the present life is already prepared by the action of previous existence, so also the direction of free will in the present life determines the course for the future life.

AE was very conscious about the role of free will in life. Through methods of intense concentration and meditation he endeavoured to gain command over mental power. By means of strong will power he streamlined his thought to the negation of desire. In a letter to Charles Weekes (May, 1907), he wrote: "I am working for causes I feel to be good." And,
"I won't weep as I go back or whine about circumstances."(81) This gives enough evidence to his self-confidence. He knew that thought and intention bore the mirror to one's personality. Hence, so far as the mind was pure and without blemish, action was just. And, conversely, noble deeds, if done with reluctance, was in vain. In an open letter, published in The Irish Times, December, 1922, AE had intended the following lines to the Irish Republicans:

Some of you argue that it is only by suffering and sacrifice a people come to the highest in them. But that crown comes to those whose sacrifice is willing, not to those on whom suffering is forced. (82)

Love and wilful sacrifice had been the guiding principles of Russell's life. These two qualities made him popular among the Irish farmers and helped him to rise as one of the chief mystic poets of the time. Though both W.B.Yeats and William Russell had their childhood fancies cradled on the same source, Yeats worked
hard on improvising the occult faculties in order to explore the mysteries of occult-world. But, though AE is known for some time to have taken interest in occult phenomena, he refrained from it, soon after knowing that quest of knowledge had no limits. The art of sorcery and black magic had quite captured him for a time, but he rose above its domain to see the clear sunshine of love and life upon the earth's face. Unlike the majority of Western philosophers, AE did not see the importance of cultivating psychic power which might induce ability to do hypnotism or materialization. He had very likely read the article of W.Q. Judge in The Path (Imagination and Occult Phenomena, The Path, Vol.VIII, 1892) where the Theosophist had given an explicit explanation to material manifestations and narrated, as had been told to him by Mme. Blavatsky, how the art became easy, once the concentration and image-making became vivid with the meditator's will. Had AE really been interested in the field with a strong will and mental perseverance, he could
easily have had mastery over supernaturalism. But conversely, the spiritual gravitation drew him more towards the mystic fountain than to the occult.

The mystic philosophy of AE is unique in the sense that it is not evolved of any religious dogma. It grew naturally in him, since he was a boy in the tender age, and bloomed into a full-fledged practical philosophy in manhood. He looked upon his natural inclination towards Theosophy and Oriental philosophy as a case of spiritual affinity. It appeared so genuine and reasonable to him that he did not even consider it worth proving to others, but only said in his half-finished book, *The Sunset of Fantasy*:

> If you are good you will delight in the law. If you are not good you will hate it. (83)

The unknown seers of the Upanishads, the Chinese and Sufi mystics, and the forerunners of the Theosophical Society had appealed to his mind. In their writings he perceived the quintessence of all the wise philosophies and
religions of the world and, above all, a
keen sininess to his inner faith and
convictions. Though Russell's philosophy
has failed to come to the lime because of
political turmoils and lack of propagation,
it unfolds that rare quality which had once
attracted all the Western theologians
towards the spiritual glories of Eastern
lands. A proper study of his doctrines would
be source of much solace to the people of the
whole world in general and to those scholars
who are interested in this field of literary
mysticism in particular.
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