

**ACCELERATING OUR EVOLUTION, GROWTH:  
RENOUNCING NIRVANA  
SHORTENING OUR DEVACHAN**

**William Q. Judge, ‘Correspondence No. 3’, September, 1892**

**In: *Echoes of the Orient*, Vol. 3, p. 408 (PLP edition); p. 396 (TUP edition)**

**Ques. 31** (E.H.M.) — *Is it wrong to try and enter Nirvana?*

**Ans.** — For the majority — no, no more than it is wrong to try and sleep when due season arrives. But while we have work to do we have no right to take that rest, and to the true worker with nature the time to enter into Nirvana is not until *all* are prepared to enter as well as he.

Speaking plainly, the Eastern School is hardly intended to fit [one] for entrance into Nirvana. All members of it have taken pledges which, whether they remember them or not, will affect their future lives and force them to work for humanity in one way or another. Directly they attempt to gain spiritual benefit selfishly instead of trying to help their brothers, they will feel the innate calling to work, which cannot be evaded. And so long as this is so, it is manifestly impossible that they should enter Nirvana. This should not prevent their trying however, for until they have attained so lofty a state of perfection as to allow of their becoming Nirvāṇis, it is impossible for them to forego the prize and become Nirmāṇakāyas of Compassion.

But the bulk of humanity are not members of the E.S.T. and the foregoing cannot apply to them, for whom, if they desire freedom from the cares of existence and of rebirth, there can be nothing wrong in the endeavor to enter Nirvana.

It is well to remember however that even the Nirvāṇi’s rest is not a permanent one, and that he must reemerge, and then he recommences life as a *Pratyeka Buddha* (see *Voice of the Silence*, page 43).

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**Helena P. Blavatsky, ‘Is the desire to “live” selfish?’**

**Article in *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, No. 10(58), July, 1884, pp. 242-243**

**In: H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 6, pp. 244-245**

The struggle then between Good and Evil, God and Satan, Suras and Asuras, Devas and Daityas, which is mentioned in the sacred books of all the nations and races, symbolizes the battle between unselfish and the selfish impulses, which takes place in a man, who tries to follow the higher purposes of Nature, until the lower animal tendencies, created by selfishness, are completely conquered, and the enemy thoroughly routed and annihilated.

It has also been often put forth in various theosophical and other occult writings that the only difference between an ordinary man who works along with Nature during the course of cosmic evolution and an occultist, is that the latter, by his superior knowledge, adopts such methods of training and discipline as will hurry on that process of evolution, and he thus reaches in a comparatively very short time that apex to ascend to which the ordinary individual may take perhaps billions of years. In short, in a few thousand years he approaches that form of evolution which ordinary humanity will attain to perhaps in the sixth or the seventh round during the process of Manvantara, i.e., cyclic progression.

It is evident that average man cannot become a MAHATMA in one life, or rather in one incarnation. Now those, who have studied the occult teachings concerning Devachan and our after-states, will remember that between two incarnations there is a considerable period of subjective existence. The greater the number of such Devachanic periods, the greater is the number of years over which this evolution is extended. The chief aim of the occultist is therefore to so control himself as to be able to control his future states, and thereby gradually shorten the duration of his Devachanic states between his two incarnations.

In his progress, there comes a time when, between one physical death and his next re-birth, there is no Devachan but a kind of spiritual sleep, the shock of death, having, so to say, stunned him into a state of unconsciousness from which he gradually recovers to find himself reborn, to continue his purpose. The period of this sleep may vary from twenty-five to two hundred years, depending upon the degree of his advancement. But even this period may be said to be a waste of time, and hence all his exertions are directed to shorten its duration so as to gradually come to a point when the passage from one state of existence into another is almost imperceptible. This is his last incarnation, as it were, for the shock of death no more stuns him.

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### **Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine Commentaries*, pp. 618-620**

**Mr. Old** : *Is it possible to escape Devachan, say from pure aversion to its useless inactivity?*

**Mme. Blavatsky** : Most assuredly. Don't desire anything and you won't have Devachan. You will have nothing to hang your consciousness on. You will be asleep and snore and have no dreams.

**Mr. Old** : *That is worse than ever. Let us dream out of preference.*

**Mme. Blavatsky** : But there are persons who reach to such wisdom that once they are dead they are perfectly done with. I have taken off my dress and here I am. What am I going to do? Shall I go to sleep, and so on. And the person shall do as he likes.

(...)

**Mme. Blavatsky** : That is just what the adepts do. They have a perfect right to Nirvāṇa, but they won't go. They think it is selfish to do so, and they won't go. They refuse the Nirvāṇic condition. That is just like Gautama did. He wants to be present, but he has no right to interfere with Karma.

**Mr. Burrows** : *That would be the highest form of unselfishness.*

**Mme. Blavatsky** : Most assuredly, because it is suffering. Every Nirmāṇakāya suffers, because it is terrible to be there, and see the misery and sufferings of people, and not to be able to help them.

**Mrs. Besant** : *Still, you are a force for good.*

**Mme. Blavatsky** : Most assuredly. This is the most glorious thing, and that is what they say that Buddha did and many of the adepts.

**Mr. Old** : *It is called the great renunciation.*

(...)

**Mr. B. Keightley** : *Besides the Nirmāṇakāyas, others escape. There are numerous cases of speedy reincarnation without Devachan.*

(...)

**Mrs. Besant** : *Suppose you had a very noble type who had not evolved sufficiently to refuse Nirvāṇa. Would he be obliged to reincarnate? He who had not reached quite far enough to remain?*

**Mme. Blavatsky** : An adept who has not even reached and who may not reach Nirvāṇa may remain as Nirmāṇakāya. He may refuse the higher state of Devachan, simply if he reached that point of consciousness in what there is no illusion possible for him—that he knows too much.

**Mr. Old** : *I thought perhaps there was a middle way.*

**Mme. Blavatsky** : No sooner they are dead than there are some who step into another body where they can do good.

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**Gottfried de Purucker, *The Dialogues of GdP*, Vol. 3, pp. 427-428, 233-234, 313-314**

[427-428]

**G. de P.** — . . . Take for instance a chela. Now if we did not know of the teaching, we would say, Oh, a chela, a very lofty man or woman — surely that means a long, long, long devachan of rest and happiness and peace. Won't it be beautiful for him when he dies!

But you see that is not what the chela wants. He is striving to reduce his devachan. He is striving to become spiritualized rather than merely loftily intellectualized, he is striving to come back to earth to help. His heart is filled not with kāma-lokic instincts, nor with devachanic instincts, nor even with nirvanic instincts which he resigns. But his whole being is filled with the love of everything around him. He wants to come back, he wants to help, he wants to give himself. His whole being is spiritualized. The result is that in him there is very little of the making of the devachanī.

[233-234]

**Student** — *You said that the devachanic state may be shortened at will.*

**G. de P.** — It can be. Devachan is like a sleep. Just as a man lies down on his bed at night and rests, he can shorten his sleep if he will; and Devachan in a sense is a sleep, a repose.

**Student** — *Will his desire tend to shorten the Devachan?*

**G. de P.** — Not necessarily, unless combined with the feeling of compassion. The noble-minded man who desires to shorten his devachanic state and who is yearning to be at work again in such noble acts in earth-life, thereby stamps his consciousness with an impulse to return to Earth to continue such noble work, just as a man who lies down in his bed at night and says to himself: I must arise early in the morning to help so and so. In both cases the consciousness acts automatically and shortens the rest-period.

Contrariwise, if the man had just the love of doing compassionate works, but without the yearning to be *active* in it — do you see the difference ? — then all the Devachan will be passed in that state of consciousness of an abstract love of doing compassionate works, without the definite desire to be active in them.

[313-14]

**G. de P.** — The question of 'cutting short one's Devachan' by will-power is but one part of the training for chelaship. Even a single and strongly willed determination to shorten the Devachan will indeed have its effect, especially if the same resolve had been taken in previous lives, so that there is now an accumulated energy behind the aspiration. All such acts are of course difficult to do, and it is foolish 'to minimize the difficulty' of them. A good deal more is necessary than merely to 'imagine' that we can do so by a single decision. In order to shorten the devachanic rest-period in any appreciable amount of time, it requires the concentrated and unremitting effort of a number of lives.

But while I speak of the difficulties, and point out the obvious fact that Olympus, the seat of the gods, cannot be reached in a single step, nevertheless, dear friend, you should never forget that the time to begin is NOW; that the moment of choice is NOW; and that the sooner you make the definite choice and set your will like iron to achieve your objective, the sooner will you reach it.

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