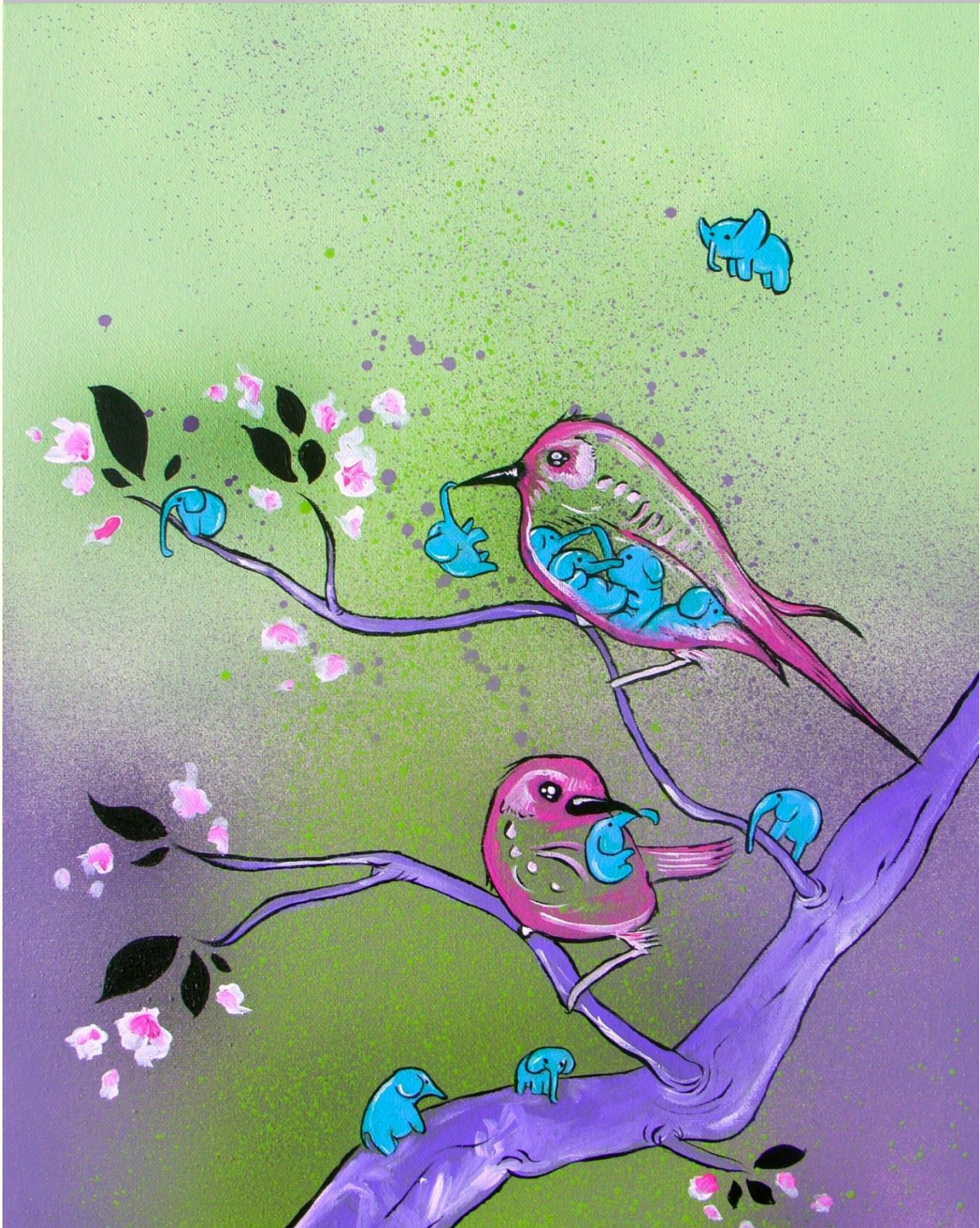


*The Hindu practice of Pind Daan or Shraddha is  
a mere superstition*



## Contents and central ideas<sup>1</sup>

### **The Hindu practice of Pind Daan or Shraddha is a mere superstition.**

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#### **Editorial Note by H.P. Blavatsky.**

While doubting the omnipotence of Gadadhara and her threats, we trust the word of honest pilgrims who saw “the shadow of their departed relatives.” 4

The earth’s atmosphere is jam-packed with the astral remains of men and women disintegrating in the limbus of the Roman Catholics (kama-loka) — images of empty shells (ghosts) that are magnetically drawn to those whom they had loved on earth. 4

The Hindu practice of Pind Daan or Shraddha is a mere superstition, and any effects thereby produced are caused unconsciously by the strong belief of the temple’s priest. 5

#### **The best way to help a restless ghost is to stop thinking of it, and allow nature to take its course.**

The body being only the covering of the soul, at its dissolution we shall discover all the secrets of nature, and darkness shall be dispelled. — Seneca 5

No man or priest can impede the immutable law of nature (karma), especially after the death of the person that evolved it. 5

#### **The departed should be left alone to rest in peace, in the bosom of the earth.**

It is the cunning Brahmins who need the Pind Daan more than the Asuras, and the greedy Christian clergy who exploit the credulity of their pious laity by extorting money from the bereaved in useless ceremonies and prayers upon the dead. 6

Semi-Exoteric Constitution of Man (Table). 6

#### **Suggested reading for students.**

From our Constitution of Man Series. 8



<sup>1</sup> Frontispiece by Jared Konopitski.

# The Hindu practice of Pind Daan or Shraddha is a mere superstition.

## Because Pind Daan cannot hasten the deliverance of the soul from the body of the departed.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, No. 1 (49), October 1883, pp. 23-24. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PINDAMS AT GYA) V pp. 310-13. In order to facilitate Internet search-engine access to this article, "Pindam" in the original text has been changed to Pind Daan; "Gya," to Gaya; and Godadhara, to Gadādhara. — ED. PHIL.

Referring to N.D.K.'s<sup>1</sup> query and your reply in *The Theosophist* for June 1883, on the efficacy of funeral ceremonies,<sup>2</sup> may I be permitted to ask for the explanation on the following?

It is generally believed that after death the souls of some men, owing either to their own misdeeds or the influence of evil stars, cling to this earth and wander on it, assuming at times various shapes and remaining in a state of continued unrest; and that the only way by which they can be delivered from this unhappy condition, is through the offering by some one related to them of what is commonly called *Pind Daan*<sup>3</sup> laid at the feet of *Gadādhara*, the presiding Deity of Gaya. People, whose veracity can hardly be doubted, say that the ghosts very often narrate through the persons obsessed by them the tale of their sufferings, and express the desire that their friends and relatives should offer the *Pind Daan* with a view to their speedy deliverance.

If there is any truth in these stories, what is there in the shrine at Gaya that emancipates the ghosts when their previous *karmas* require that they should still hover over the earth; why should the *reliquiæ* of the departed which, under ordinary circumstances, naturally longs to prolong its artificial existence covet its final dissolution? Is it the strong *will* of the person that offers the *Pind Daan*, or is there about the place itself any latent magnetic power that destroys the *reliquiæ*? It is often related that pilgrims on their way to the sacred place see the shadows of their departed relatives imploring them to offer *Pind Daans* [311] for their benefit. It is also affirmed that in order to convince their relatives that their offering of *Pind Daan* had produced the desired effect, the ghosts sometimes promise to break the branches off some trees or a piece of cornice from some old buildings which they had haunted and in which they had resided in token of their deliverance; and that they had actually fulfilled their promise as soon as the *Pind Daan* was placed at the feet of *Gadādhara*, the time of both the events being in due time found to correspond exactly together. It is further believed by many, that if by some accident the shrine at Gaya were suf-

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<sup>1</sup> [Navroji Dorabji Khandālawala, a highly respected Judge and staunch friend of the Founders. He was initiated into the Theosophical Society on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1880, and later became President of the Poona Branch of the Theosophical Society. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

<sup>2</sup> [Consult "No need for expensive funerals," in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>3</sup> [In Hindu culture, Pind Daans are offerings to deceased ancestors; the term also doubling up as fœtus. — ED. PHIL.]

ferred to remain without any offerings being made to it, even for one single day, the presiding *Asura* of the place would rise from his resting place and shake the very world to its foundation.

For any reasoning person, who does not blindly follow the *Śāstras*,<sup>1</sup> it is a puzzle which he finds difficult to solve, while at the same time he can hardly help believing the stories when related by persons whose truthfulness is beyond question.

If the offerings help really in any way to destroy the Hindu *Bhūtas*, can they also produce the same result upon ghosts which, while they lived on earth had neither any regard for the Hindu religion, nor had they ever heard of Gaya and its *Pind Daan*?

A short explanation from you would be of an immense value to your Hindu readers as throwing light on one of the most mysterious ceremonies daily performed by hundreds of Hindus coming to Gaya from the different parts of India and at a great cost of money and convenience.

A HINDU

ŚIMLA, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1883



## Editorial Note by H.P. Blavatsky.

**While doubting the omnipotence of Gadadhara and her threats, we trust the word of honest pilgrims who saw “the shadow of their departed relatives.”**

**The earth’s atmosphere is jam-packed with the astral remains of men and women disintegrating in the limbus of the Roman Catholics (*kama-loka*)<sup>2</sup> — images of empty shells (ghosts) that are magnetically drawn to those whom they had loved on earth.**

The answer would be more satisfactory, we think, were it to come from some initiated Brahman or Yogi. If we believe in *bhoots* or “shells” who have to wait in the earth’s atmosphere for the slow dissolution of their *reliquiæ*, we cannot say the same of Gadādhara. We believe the latter — as we believe all the other minor Hindu gods and goddesses — no more than the generic name assumed by a host of elementaries<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The *Śāstras* are the repository of the opinions of fallible men.

Cf. “The *Śāstras* can be regarded identical with the *Vedas* as little as the many hundred of conflicting commentaries upon the Gospels by the so-called Christian Fathers are identical with the Christianity of Christ. The *Śāstras* are the repository of the many individual opinions of fallible men. And the fact alone that they do conflict in their endless and various interpretations with each other, prove that they must also conflict with the subject they comment upon. Hence, that they are distinct from, and not in the least identical with, the *Vedas*.”

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (VIŚIŠTĀDVAITA PHILOSOPHY) IV p. 426. Full text under the title “Blavatsky on the Viśishtādvaita Philosophy,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>2</sup> [Clinging to the physical body, they dissipate only with the disappearance of its last atom. Look up Astral Body, on page 7 of this study. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>3</sup> [Consult “Blavatsky on Elementals and Elementaries,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

who play their tricks upon Eastern credulity as some spooks play theirs upon Western imagination. But this is our personal belief, for which we claim no degree of infallibility. While disbelieving the omnipotence of Gadādhara and her threats there seems no reason why we should doubt, at the same time, the word of honest and truthful pilgrims when they tell us [312] that they saw “the shadow of their departed relatives.” The air is thronged with *shells* — the pale reflections of men and women who lived and whose *reliquiæ* are magnetically drawn to those whom they had loved on earth.

**The Hindu practice of Pind Daan or Shraddha is a mere superstition,<sup>1</sup> and any effects thereby produced are caused unconsciously by the strong belief of the temple’s priest.**

As to the efficacy of *Pind Daan* or *Śrāddha* we deny it most emphatically. The custom of such *post-mortem* offerings having been in existence for long centuries and forming part and parcel of the Hindu religion, they produce effects, only owing to the strong belief in them of the offerers, or the *pujarees*. It is the latter who cause unconsciously the production of such phenomena. Let there only be a strong medium in the midst of pilgrims (something that happens invariably in a country so full of sensitives as India is), and the intensity and sameness of their thoughts bent constantly and simultaneously upon the object of their pilgrimage, will affect the throng of the elementaries around them. They will repeat that which they find in their friends’ brains and clamour for *Pind Daan*. After which, following the same idea which develops in the pilgrim’s thought, *i.e.*, that the offering will bring on deliverance — they, “the ghosts,” will promise a sign of it, and perform the promise mechanically and unconsciously as a parrot would repeat a word, or any trained animal performs an act, led on by the superior intelligence of the master mind, that had trained it to this.

**The best way to help a restless ghost is to stop thinking of it, and allow nature to take its course.**

**The body being only the covering of the soul, at its dissolution we shall discover all the secrets of nature, and darkness shall be dispelled. — Seneca<sup>2</sup>**

**No man or priest can impede the immutable law of nature (karma), especially after the death of the person that evolved it.**

What is it that puts an end to the unrestfulness of the “Ghost”? Nothing particular, most probably: neither the magnetism of the place devoted to the *Pind Daan*, nor the strong will of the person who offers it; but simply the absence of any idea connected with the reappearance of the “ghost”; the firm assurance, the implicit confidence of

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<sup>1</sup> [Cf. “The *Śrāddha* is a posthumous ceremony performed for nine days by the closest relative of the deceased. At one time it was magical. At present, it consists among other practices, primarily in the scattering of small pellets of cooked rice in front of the door to the house of the defunct. If the crows devour the rice promptly, it is a sign that the soul is liberated and is at peace. If not, these voracious birds refraining from touching the food, furnish the proof that the *pisācha* or *bhūta* (the ghost) is present to prevent them. The *Śrāddha* is a superstition, no doubt, but not more so, to be sure, than the Novenas and Masses for the dead.” — *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE BLUE LOTUS) XII, p. 180-81 *fn.* Full text under the title “The Legend of the Blue Lotus,” in our Higher Ethics and Devotion Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>2</sup> [H.P. Blavatsky quoting Seneca, in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FACTS AND IDEATION) VI p. 347.]

the medium that the “ghost” having been comforted by the offering of the *Pind Daan* can no longer return, or feel unrestful. That’s all. It is the medium’s brain, his own creative power of imagination that calls forth out of the normal subjectivity into *ab-normal objectivity* the ghosts that appear, except in the cases of the apparitions of *real spirits* at the moments immediately following their death. No living [313] being, no god or goddess has the power of impeding the immutable law of nature called *karma*, especially after the death of the person that evolved it.

## The departed should be left alone to rest in peace, in the bosom of the earth.

**It is the cunning Brahmans who need the Pind Daan more than the Asuras, and the greedy Christian clergy who exploit the credulity of their pious laity by extorting money from the bereaved in useless ceremonies and prayers upon the dead.**

We would be pleased to see an infuriated *Asura* shaking in its wrath “the world to its foundation.” Many a day, during the invasions of and attacks upon cities by the armies of an enemy, have the shrines remained without any offering as they have often been destroyed, and yet the world moveth not. It is the presiding and hungry, when not simply *greedy*, geniuses of the shrines, the Brahmans, who need the *Pind Daan*, we should say, more than the Gadādharas and the *omnia-gatherum*<sup>1</sup> of such. The masses claimed for the quieting of the souls of Christian ghosts paid in hard cash instead of being rewarded mostly in nature are of the same kind and efficacy. And if we are asked to give our honest opinion upon both the modes adopted by the priests of every religion to make the living spend their money in useless ceremonies upon their dead, we say, that both means are in our sight no better than a legal and authorized extortion, the tribute paid by credulity to cunning. Change the name and the story is told of civilized Christians as it is of half-civilized Hindus. But — *Mundus vult decipi*<sup>2</sup> — and who can prevent a willing man from hanging himself!



### Semi-Exoteric Constitution of Man (Table).

There now follows a table from “Constitution of Man – Overview.” Full text in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.

<sup>1</sup> [A miscellaneous collection of things or persons.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur, i.e.,* The world wants to be deceived, so let it be deceived.]

**Semi-Exoteric Constitution of the Microcosm or Man, Citizen of the Universe and Telesphoros.**

**Immortal Higher Triad, the Divine Self**

- True individuality, the Sutratman of the Upanishads.
- The Imperishable Monas, i.e., Atman–Buddhi–Manas, permeated by the One Universal Life, or Breath.
- Spiritual Self dying (**Death 4**), so that Its Ideation can live.

**Mortal Lower Tetrad, overshadowed by the Divine Self**

- False individuality of the common man, who identifies with the personal and the transient.
- Other ephemeral aspects of the quaternary personality.
- The heart, being the organ of Spiritual Consciousness, represents the Higher Triad. The liver and spleen represent the quaternary, taken as a whole.

Macrocosmic planes	<b>ADI-BUDDHA</b>	<b>MAHA-BUDDHI</b>	<b>MAHAT, COSMIC INTELLIGENCE</b>		<b>FOHAT</b>	<b>JIVA</b>	<b>ASTRAL</b>	<b>PRAKRITI</b>
Microcosmic planes	Atman	Buddhi	Manas or Dual Mind		Kama (Manas)	(Kama) Prana	Linga-Sharira	Sthula-Sharira
Consciousness' virtual foci	<b>Universal Self</b>	<b>Spiritual Ego</b>	<b>Higher Ego</b>	<b>Lower Ego</b>	<b>Animal Desires</b>	<b>Life Force</b>	<b>Astral Body</b>	<b>Visible Body</b>
Auric Egg (Atmic Aura)	<b>Principle ②: Auric Egg, monadic envelope and amnion of the physical man. Auric Egg and Prana are essentially the same.</b>							
Auric Egg dynamics	Periphery of the Auric Egg and our point of communication with Universal Planes.		The two are bridged by Antahkarana. When Ahamkara (selfish Self) is strong, Antahkarana is said to be “drunk or insane.”		Vital Animal, Living Soul, Nephesh.		Transitory emanation of the Auric Egg.	
Three? Five? Seven?	<b>Higher Principles</b>			<b>Middle Principle</b>		<b>Lower Aspects</b>		
	Potency of the spiritual man: divine, higher manas-mind, nous or noetic intelligence, the reincarnating ego.			Potential of the worldly man: animal, astral, lower mind or soul; psyche-périsprit.		Physical man is the musical instrument; his Higher Ego, the performing artist.		
Pauline ternary	<b>Spirit</b> (Plato's λόγον, ideal life or ζωή)		<b>Soul</b> (Plato's ἄλογον)		(Physical life or βίος)		<b>Body</b>	
Platonic terms	<b>Agathon</b>	<b>Nous</b>	<b>Phren</b>	<b>Thymos</b>		<b>Eidolon</b>	<b>Soma</b>	
Principles and aspects	Principle ①, Universal, not individual. I-ness	Principle ③ Spiritual Soul. I am, That I am	Principle ④ Enduring Individuality.	Aspect ③ I am I	Permeates every principle & aspect.	Aspect ① vitalising aspects ③ and ②.	Aspect ②	Medium of every principle & aspect.
Faculties, fields, and forte	The Will to Be, and to Become. The Amaranthine Dream.	Spiritual intelligence, discrimination, intuition by inner sight.	Abstract, impersonal, noble thoughts, and ideals.	Concrete, personal, selfish thoughts, and “realistic” interests.	Worldly desires, lust (επιθυμία), propensities, and proclivities.	Individualised breath of the One Life, electromagnetic vitality.	Protean model of the gross physical body; and its subtle counterpart.	Gross, bulky, living substance, the physical body.
Radiation and emanations	Radiation of the Ineffable One Pure Spirit. (First Logos)	Emanation of Alaya (Anima Mundi), Ray and Vehicle of Atman.	First emanation of Pradhana, or unevolved cause.	Reflection or shadow of Buddhi plus Higher Manas, having potentialities of both.	Closely linked with Lower Manas, the Green-Red animal monster in us.	Closely linked with Kama-Manas. Prana has no number, as it pervades every other principle.	Closely linked with Kama-Prana, and inseparable from it.	
Other terms and allegories	A Ray of Paramatman (Uncreated Ray) Jivatman.	Sophia-Wisdom, Beautiful Helena, Chase Penelope.	Manasaputras, Breaths or Principles.				Vehicle (Vahan) of Prana, Astral, Etheric Double.	
Metaphorical gender	Sexless	Female	Sexless	Male	Male	Sexless	Male	Male
Apparitions to distant places	Adepts can project consciously, and dying persons unconsciously, an illusory form or phantom of their personality to any distant location — while their physical body is left “entranced.” This double is termed Mayavi-Rupa.							
Deaths and post-mortem states	<b>After Death 2</b> the purified mind enters Devachan, a long period of personal “bliss during the interim between two incarnations, as a reward for all the unmerited suffering he has endured” and where unfulfilled aspirations are enacted subjectively.			<b>Death 2.</b> Kama-manas becomes a distinct body of ante-mortem desires (Kama-Rupa) and remains in “desire world” (Kama-Loka) until its final dissipation. Attempts to delay death, e.g., by necromancy, is Black Magic.		Eventually, Kama-Prana is released and re-becomes Jiva.	<b>Death 3.</b> Clinging to the physical body, it dissipates only with the disappearance of its last atom.	<b>Death 1.</b> Attempts to preserve death, e.g., by taxidermy, is Black Magic.

## Suggested reading for students.



### From our Constitution of Man Series.

- A CONGENITAL PREPONDERANCE OF FIRE ELEMENTALS MAKES A MAN IMPERVIOUS TO FIRE
- ANCIENT BELIEFS IN THE IMMORTALITY OF SOUL
- ANCIENT OPINIONS UPON PSYCHIC BODIES
- APOLLONIUS COMFORTS A BEREAVED FATHER
- ASTRAL BODIES OR DOPPELGÄNGERS
- ATMAN IS A RAY FROM A SPARK OF UNCREATED RAY
- BLAVATSKY ON AETHROBACY AND FAKIRS
- BLAVATSKY ON OCCULT DEVELOPMENT
- BLAVATSKY ON THE DUAL ASPECT OF WISDOM
- BLAVATSKY ON THREE ESSAYS BY É. LÉVI
- BLOOD IS THE FIRST INCARNATION OF UNIVERSAL FLUID
- CHINESE BELIEFS ABOUT THE HUMAN SOUL
- CICERO'S DREAM OF SCIPIO AND MACROBIUS' COMMENT
- CLASSIFICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES IN MAN
- CONCERNING THE DOCTRINES OF THE THEOSOPHISTS
- CONSTITUTION OF MAN – DRAWING
- CONSTITUTION OF MAN – ESOTERIC
- CONSTITUTION OF MAN – OVERVIEW
- COSMOS AND DEITY IN MAN (DRAWING)
- DAS' SCIENCE OF THE EMOTIONS (1908)
- DEATH AND IMMORTALITY
- DEATH AND POST-MORTEM STATES
- DEATH HAS NO TERRORS
- DEVACHAN, DREAM REALM WHERE PURE SOULS ARE REWARDED
- DREAMLESS SLEEP



**CONSTITUTION OF MAN SERIES  
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS**

- ELIPHAS LEVI ON DEATH AND SATAN
- EMOTIONS' TRIUNE NATURE
- EVOLUTIONARY TRANSMIGRATION OF MATERIAL PARTICLES IN NATURE
- FACING SEVEN VIRGINS IN THE HALL OF JUDGMENT
- FROM THE STRONGHOLD OF YOUR SOUL, CHASE ALL YOUR FOES AWAY
- HAIR IS THE RETAINER OF PRANA
- IN DEEP SLEEP WE DREAM NO MORE AND CONFABULATE WITH THE STARS
- IS SUICIDE A CRIME?
- JUDGE ON THE INNER CONSTITUTION OF MAN
- JUDGE ON THE OCCULT NATURE OF MAN
- LÉVI ON DEATH BEING THE BIRTH-PANG OF LIFE
- LIFE IS AN INDESTRUCTIBLE UNIVERSAL FORCE
- LOW BUFFOONERY AND MOCKING LAUGHS
- LYMPH IS A MASQUE FOR NYMPH
- MAN IS THE CAUSE OF GLOBAL WARMING
- MAN, THE JEWEL OF THE UNIVERSE (THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS)
- NEED OF A SPIRITUAL VOCABULARY
- NO NEED FOR EXPENSIVE FUNERALS
- NOUS AUGOEIDES OF THE NEOPLATONISTS
- NOUS MOVES MAN
- OEDIPUS AND SPHINX UNRIDDED
- OSIRIS AND TYPHON, HIGHER TRIAD AND LOWER TETRAD
- PLATO ON THE APPLE OF THE EYE
- PLATO'S TWO HORSES
- PLUTARCH COMFORTS APOLLONIUS
- PLUTARCH COMPARING PASSIONS AND DISEASES – TR. WHITE
- PLUTARCH ON BOASTED WISDOM, FORTITUDE, MAGNANIMITY, AND TEMPERANCE
- PLUTARCH ON EXERCISES PROPER FOR A SCHOLAR – TR. POOLE
- PLUTARCH ON PLATO'S PROCREATION OF THE SOUL – TR. PHILIPS
- POST-MORTEM WANDERINGS OF THE WICKED SOUL
- PREMATURE AND PHENOMENAL GROWTHS
- PSYCHOLOGY LACKS ENTIRELY KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUL
- PSYCHOMETRY IS THE NATURAL BUT LATENT FACULTY IN US

**CONSTITUTION OF MAN SERIES**  
**SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS**

- REAL DREAMS ARE ACTIONS OF THE TRUE SELF
- RELEASING THE ASTRAL SOUL FROM ONE'S ASHES
- SEMI-EXOTERIC OVERVIEW OF THE INNER CONSTITUTION OF MAN
- SEPTENARY ANTHROPOS (THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS)
- SEPTENARY IS THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN
- SIXTH SENSE IS REASON OVER INSTINCT
- SPECULATIONS ABOUT REINCARNATION AND MATERIALIZED SPIRITS
- SPIRIT AND PERISPIRIT
- SUBBA ROW ON KAMA-LOKA
- SUBBA ROW ON THE SEVENFOLD PRINCIPLE IN MAN
- SUBBA ROW ON THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE
- SYNESIUS CONCERNING DREAMS
- THE AQUILINE NOSE IS ROYAL AND NOBLE
- THE DEVOTIONAL LOVE AND NOBLE ASPIRATIONS OF LOWER MANAS
- THE ESOTERIC PHYSIOLOGY OF MAN
- THE HEART IS THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS
- THE IMAGE-MAKING POWER
- THE LIFE PRINCIPLE
- THE MASTER ATOM IS MAN'S SPIRITUAL SOUL
- THE MOON REGULATES THE PRANA OF NATURE AND MAN
- THE OCCULT INFLUENCE OF MAN'S ACTIVE WILL
- THE PERISPIRIT OF ALLAN KARDEC
- THE PROPHECY OF GENERAL YERMOLOV
- THE SUTRATMAN OF THE UPANISHADS
- THE TWO VOICES OF LORD TENNYSON
- THE VOICE OF THE WILL IS THE ATOMIC POINT
- THREE CUBITS OF THE EAR, FOUR OF THE STALK
- TIBETAN TEACHINGS ON AFTER-DEATH STATES
- TROUBLES FROM UNDISSOLVED EX-DOUBLES
- TWO SPIRITS UNITED IN THE ELYSIAN FIELDS
- WHEN INNER AND OUTER MAN ARE OFF-KILTER
- WHEN THE GREEN IS OVERCOME WITH AZURE
- WHEN THE SERPENT SLOUGHS OFF HIS SKIN

**CONSTITUTION OF MAN SERIES  
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS**

- WHO SHALL DELIVER US FROM TRIBULATION?
- WHY SECLUDING WOMEN DURING THEIR MENSTRUAL PERIOD?
- WOE FOR THE LIVING DEAD

