**THE ASTRAL BODY**

**By**

**A. E. Powell**

 **The Author is a theosophist. He has taken much of his material from the books of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater. I believe it is important to know this information for ourselves and for our friends and loved ones.**

**DEATH AND THE DESIRE ELEMENTAL**

**CHAPTER XII**

**Pp. 107-111**

 **At death, the consciousness withdraws from the dense physical body into the etheric double for a short time, usually for a few hours, and then passes into the astral body.**

 **Death thus consists of a process of unrobeing or unsheathing. The ego, the immortal part of man,, shakes off from itself, one after the other, its outer casings. First the dense physical then the etheric double: then even the astral body as we shall later see.**

 **In almost every case the actual passing-away appears to be perfectly painless, even after a long illness involving terrible suffering. The peaceful look on the face of the dead is strong evidence in favor of this statement, and it is also borne out by the direct testimony of most of those who have been questioned on the point immediately after death.**

 **At the actual moment of death, even when death is sudden, a man sees the whole of his past life marshaled before him, in its minutest detail. In a moment he sees the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life. He sees and now understands himself as he really is, unadorned by flattery or self deception. He reads his life, remaining as a spectator, looking down upon the arena he is quitting.**

 **The condition of consciousness immediately after the moment of death is usually a dreamy and peaceful one. There will also be a certain period of unconsciousness, which may last only for a moment, though often it is a few minutes, or several hours, and sometimes even days or weeks.**

 **The natural attraction between the astral counterpart and the physical body is such that, after death the astral counterpart, from force of habit, retains its accustomed form: consequently a man's physical appearance will still be preserved after death almost unchanged. Almost--because in view of the fact that astral matter is very readily molded by thought, a man who habitually thinks of himself after death as younger than he actually was at the time of death will probably assume a somewhat younger appearance.**

 **Very soon after death, in most cases, an important change takes place in the structure of the astral body, owing to the action of the dense elemental. This essence is living, though not intelligent: and for the time it is cut off from the general mass of astral essence. Blindly, instinctively and without reason it seeks its own ends and shows great ingenuity in obtaining its desires and in furthering its evolution.**

 **Evolution for it is a descent into matter, its aim being to become a mineral monad. Its object in life, therefore, is to get as near to the physical plane as it can, and to experience as many of the coarser vibrations as possible. It neither does nor could know anything of the man in whose astral body it is for the time living.**

 **It desires to preserve its separate life, and feels that it can do so only by means of its connection with the man. It is conscious of the man's lower mind, and realizes that the more mental matter it can entangle with itself the longer will be its astral life.**

 **On the death of the physical body,, knowing that the term of its separated life is limited, and that the man's astral death will more or less quickly follow, in order to make the man's astral body last as long as possible, it arranges its matter in concentric rings or shells, the coarsest outside. From the point of view of the desire elemental this is good policy, because the coarsest matter can hold together longest and best stand friction.**

**The rearranged astral body is called the YATANA, or suffering body. In the case of a very evil man in whose astral body there is a preponderance of the coarsest matter, it is called the DHRUVAM or strong body.**

 **The rearrangement takes place over the surface of the counterpart of the physical body, not over the surface of the ovoid which surrounds it.**

 **The effect is to prevent the free and full circulation of astral matter which usually takes place in the astral body. In addition, the man is able to respond only to those vibrations which are received by the outermost layer of his astral body. The man is thus shut up, as it were, in a box of astral matter, being able to see and hear things of the lowest and coarsest plane only.**

 **Although living in the midst of high influences and beautiful thought-forms, he would be almost entirely unconscious of their existence, because the particles of his astral body which could responds to those vibrations are shut in where they cannot be reached.**

 **Consequently also, being able to sense only the coarsest matter in the astral bodies of other people, and being entirely unconscious of his limitations, he would assume that the person he was looking at possessed only the unsatisfactory characteristics which he would be able to perceive.**

 **Since he can see and feel only what is lowest and coarsest, the men around him appear to be monsters of vice. Under these circumstances it is little wonder that he considers the astral world a hell.**

 **the re-arrangement of the astral body by the desire elemental does not in any way affect the recognizability of the form within the ovoid, though the natural changes which take place tend on the whole to make the form grow somewhat fainter and more spiritual in appearance as time passes on -- for reasons which will presently be made clear.**

 **In the course of time, the outermost shell or ring disintegrates: the man then becomes able to respond to the vibrations of the next higher level of the astral plane, and thus "rises to the next sub-plane". And so on from one sub-plane to another. His stay on each sub-plane, of course, correspond to the amount and activity of the matter in his astral body belonging to that sub-plane.**

 **When we speak of a man "rising" from one sub-plane to another, he need not necessarily move in space at all: He rather transfers his consciousness from, one level to another. In the case of a man with a rearranged astral body, the focus of his consciousness shifts from the outer shell to the one next within it. The man thus gradually becomes unresponsive to the vibrations of one order of matter and answers instead to those of a higher order. Thus one world with its scenery and its inhabitants would seem to fade slowly away from his view, while another world would dawn upon him.**

 **As the shell usually disintegrates gradually, the man thus finds the counterparts of physical objects growing dimmer and dimmer, while thought-forms become more and more vivid to him. If during this process he meets another man at intervals, he will imagine that the man's character is steadily improving, merely because he is himself becoming able to appreciate the higher vibration of that character. There-arrangement of the astral body, in fact, constantly interferes with man's true and full vision of his friends at all stages of their astral life.**

 **This process of re-arrangement of the astral body, which takes place with most people, can be prevented by the man setting his WILL to oppose it. In fact, anyone who understands the conditions of the astral plane should altogether DECLINE TO PERMIT THE RE-ARRANGEMENT of the astral body by the desire-elemental. The particles of the astral body will then be kept intermingled as in life, and in consequence, instead of being confined to one astral sub-plane at a time, the man will be free of all the sub-planes, according to the constitution of his astral body.**

 **The elemental, being afraid in its curious semi-conscious way, will endeavor to transfer its fear to the man who is jolting him out of there-arrangement, in order to deter him from doing so. Hence one reason why it is so useful to have knowledge of these matters before death.**

 **If the re-arrangement or shelling has already occurred, it is still possible for the condition to be broken up by someone who wishes to help the man, and for the man to be thus set free to work on the whole astral plane, instead of being confined to one level.**