

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE POWER OF THE IDEAL

WHAT IS an ideal? An Ideal refers to a person or a thing that is thought of as perfect for something. An ideal could mean an exemplar or a role model. In general, in every field, we can find an ideal to follow. There are ideal musicians, artists, lawyers, businessmen, sports personalities, leaders, showing excellence in their own particular field. They exemplify a few qualities that are needed to succeed in that particular field. They may or may not be ideal human beings, who could become the foundation for building an ideal society or an ideal nation. Today we need ideals to live a life that is worthwhile; not just successful in a worldly sense, but in an inner or spiritual sense.

What is needed is an inner conversion or change in people's minds and hearts. This change cannot be brought about by simply imposing laws, because no matter how stringent the laws are made, people succeed in finding loopholes. We cannot have a good society without good men, and we cannot have good men, merely by imposing laws. The emphasis must be on individual morality. “He [the disciple] smiles at the socialist and the reformer who endeavour by sheer force to re-arrange circumstances which arise out of the forces of human nature itself. This is but kicking against the pricks; a waste of life and energy.” (*Light on the Path*, p. 77)

We have been hearing from a very young age that we should be brotherly, we should speak the truth, we must be honest, etc. But it

is not an easy task to live the life of ethics and morals. One reason why we do not find many striving to live a morally pure life is that we face great resistance from within ourselves. We need to awaken the conscience, which has been silenced, if not killed, by centuries of unethical living. We practise morals only in an ideal condition. We drop our discipline the moment we are inconvenienced, or simply lack the motivation to act morally. People are motivated to act morally either by reason or by example.

A person who appreciates the philosophy only intellectually is quite ineffective in changing people for the better. In our days we have many preachers, orators and writers who speak and write effectively and brilliantly, but they seldom succeed in awakening the minds and hearts of people to act morally, unless they are themselves good practitioners of what they teach. Application of what we believe in builds a heart-force, which gets conveyed when we speak, and possesses transforming power.

We think and probably talk a ton, but practice only a millionth of what we have heard and inwardly found to be true. Every time we write or speak about the moral life, a voice from within must remind us, are we even *trying* to live up to it? It is very easy to advise others without practising it ourselves. We are advising all the time, as superiors in the office, as parents and elders at home or as well-meaning friends. But if we were careful, we would notice that the impact on the listener is almost magical when we speak from our own first-hand experience. Like Gandhiji, perhaps, each one of us should make it a practice to check out if we have been practising ourselves what we advise others to do. Once a mother brought her seven-year-old son to Gandhiji and requested him to advise her son not to eat too many sweets. Gandhiji told the woman to bring her son to him after two weeks. She went away perplexed but returned after two weeks. Gandhiji then advised the boy not to eat too many sweets as it was bad for his health. When the woman asked him why he had not given this advice in the first instance rather than asking her to come after two weeks, Gandhiji replied: “I also eat a

lot of sweets and needed these two weeks to give up sweets before I could advise your son.” When we *apply* what we believe in, not only will conviction arise, but we would also be able to show ways and means of overcoming the weakness.

What makes for a true and effective reformer is the power of the ideal and not his intellectual and emotional capacities. And yet an ideal should be based on true knowledge. Instead of finding fault with others, *i.e.*, instead of mentally or verbally criticizing others for their lack of discipline or virtue, we can “criticize” by becoming an *outstanding* example. The ideal inspires and transforms even the most commonplace of men.

Role models are critical for a child’s growth. In the ancient Indian tradition there is a *mantram*, *Matri devo bhava, pitri devo bhava* and *acharya devo bhava*, that enshrines an old ideal to treat parents and teachers as gods, *i.e.*, look upon them as channels and messengers of God, who were expected to take the child nearer to the divine by inculcating true moral values from childhood, by setting an example. The sacredness of householder’s life and the role played by the parents in moulding the child has been expressed by Mr. Judge, thus: “It is perfectly proper that when a suitable mate is found, a man should marry and settle down as a householder, bringing up a family with right views and high purposes. He contributes a service to humanity, who puts [leaves] children to take his place after his death, and to reproduce his true and altruistic life.”

Both teachers and parents occupy an important place in a person’s life. From the earliest times, at least in the East, the teacher was given great reverence by the pupil and the pupil was taught to look upon his teacher as second only to his father and mother in dignity. It was believed that if the pupil were disrespectful to his teacher, even in thought, it would bring about actual harm to his moral being. The reason being that there exists a *guruparampara chain*, which extends from the teacher who may perhaps only teach you your alphabets, ending in the highest spiritual chief or guide, in whose ray or descending line the pupil may be. Whether the teacher

deserves it or not, by his reverent and diligent attitude, the pupil progresses and is able to transcend his erstwhile teacher. The ordinary teacher-pupil relationship is on the material plane, and is a reflection of the guru-chela relationship on a higher, spiritual plane. The old *mantram* is a call to the parents and teachers to be as Gods, so that they could prove to be ideals worthy of emulation. An ideal in its highest sense is someone who sees the child and man as an unfolding god and helps that process of unfoldment by being a living example.

As we grow up, each one of us chooses an ideal based on our *vasanas*, *skandhas* or tendencies, brought from the past lives, as that in turn determines to what extent one is ready to emulate the example of ideal teachers and parents. Today, actors and sports personalities are generally the ideals and role models of the younger generation. Often, we take renowned industrialists, philanthropists and artists as role models. Most of them are human beings who have developed one or two aspects of their nature. There is often a lop-sided development and at times, even a debased character. If we are aiming at *integral development*, aiming to be not just good but *spiritually perfect* individuals, then who shall we choose as our ideal? We become of the nature of the ideal on which our faith is fixed. The power of our spirit is limitless, but by choosing an ideal with limitations, we unconsciously limit the power of the spirit to expand beyond the limitations of the ideal. Any person, however great he may seem in our eyes, is not infallible or without limitations. There is no need to *compare* ourselves with our ideal. We may only remember that *every* good quality must be developed to *perfection*. We study the lives of great people to get inspiration and insight as to how that goal was achieved by them against all odds. In making a comparison we might feel despair or may develop a feeling of inferiority. Even jealousy might creep in insidiously. A continual comparison may make us anxious that we have not yet reached the ideal.

Even a great individual with development of one or two aspects

of his nature—say truthfulness and honesty—cannot compare with the perfected being, even in those aspects which he has developed, because they are not *perfected* in him—practised to the hilt—as they are in case of Buddha or Jesus. The Perfected Ones have reached that state of perfection after passing through varied and subtle temptations and coming out triumphant. There is a further danger in taking any *living person* as an ideal. Mr. Crosbie says, it is not the best thing to rely upon any *living person*, to the extent of *idealizing* him; for if such a person is even seemingly swept away in darkness—such as a lapse in discipline, or is accused and slandered even falsely—then it would dishearten us. We have examples of spiritual leaders that have lost some of their followers because of accusations of their involvement—justly or unjustly—in a sex-scandal; or accusation of moneymaking or corruption, etc. Hence, both Mr. Judge and Mr. Crosbie advised fellow Theosophists, not to put them on any pedestal or to think highly of them. Mr. Judge wrote to one such member: “I am like you, struggling on the road. Perhaps the veil might in an instant fall down from your spirit, and you will be long ahead of us all.” H.P.B., too, said: “Do not follow me or my Path: follow the path I show, the Masters who are behind.”

We are asked to accept only the Masters as our Ideals. They were once human beings like us, but through training and development, they have achieved perfection. We have in us, potentially, all the powers and knowledge displayed by Them. It is from scriptures such as the *Gita*, that we understand what it is to emulate the Masters, the Wise Ones. The *Gita* describes the qualities of a Wise One, and some of them are: “freedom from self-esteem, hypocrisy, and injury to others; it is patience, sincerity, respect for spiritual instructors, purity, firmness, self-restraint, dispassion for objects of sense, freedom from pride, and a meditation upon birth, death, decay, sickness, and error; it is an exemption from self-identifying attachment for children, wife, and household, and a constant unwavering steadiness of heart upon the arrival of every event, whether favourable or unfavourable; it is a never-ceasing

love for me alone.” Since there is no limit to perfection, Mr. Crosbie says, “Our ideals are never reached: they continually *precede* us.”

Each one of us is capable of setting an example and becoming a role model in our own small way. Not a single example of righteous living is unimportant. By our indifference or negative attitude, such as, “how can a single individual make any difference?” we may allow the evil to swell. Shri Krishna teaches in the *Gita*, “Whatever is practised by the most excellent men, that is also practiced by others.” It is by people following ideal role models that we have an ideal society. If the leaders of the society are corrupt, the entire fabric of the society is likely to get corrupted. Therefore, all those who are held as ideals and emulated by general humanity have a great responsibility of being constantly vigilant and leading a pure and virtuous life from moment to moment.

Jug Suraiya, a prominent Indian journalist, author and columnist, goes a step further and reminds us of Sartre’s remark that saints are vigilant against sin, but what they should be guarding against is not sin but their saintliness. One should not fall into the trap of admiring the image of goodness that has been created around one’s self, which tends to enhance one’s ego and sense of self-worth. When one considers himself great, he may begin to feel that all that is done by him is also great, because a great man can only do great things.

Krishna in the *Gita* has been hinting at mass psychology which applies to all facets of life. Children emulate their parents, and so also, the subjects of a nation emulate their ruler. The republican form of government requires the highest type of human nature, “a type nowhere at present existing,” writes Herbert Spencer. The required change in the mind and character of the people could be brought about only when there are leaders who will purify themselves by means of self-sacrifice and mortification. They should be ready to follow the ideal of “servant-leadership,” which means that they are servants first, and are able to become leaders because their motive is to “serve.” They seek to draw out, inspire and develop the best in people from within, without.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE STRANGER—II

IN THIS novel Camus explores the philosophy of Absurdism, which claims that life is not inherently meaningful. His concept of the absurd implores us to accept the meaninglessness of life and “rebel by rejoicing in what life does offer.” Human life has no grand purpose or meaning, but the only certain thing in life is the inevitability of death. The Absurdist philosophy believes that physical death represents the complete and final end of life. In other words, there is no belief in the afterlife. The philosophy of Absurdism has been explained in his well-known essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. It is a Greek myth in which Sisyphus is condemned by the gods for eternity to roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll down again to the bottom every time he reaches the top. This is supposed to represent a human being’s continuous and persistent struggle against the absurdity of life.

The question of the meaning of life is vast and deep, in which we are trying to find out the purpose of human existence. The answer of theistic religion is that the Universe and man were created by God, the supernatural creator and that our purpose on earth is to submit to the will of God and fulfil his divine plan. On the other hand, according to Darwinian theory, life is a result of blind, purposeless natural processes. Since our existence is the result of an accident in nature, we need not search for any direction or meaning to life. The “existentialist” philosophers, such as Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer and Sigmund Freud seem to suggest that life does not come with a pre-assigned meaning. If our lives have meaning, it is something we endow them with. This is a subjective view, in which each one of us constructs the meaning by interpreting life in his own way so that one person might get meaning from hiking in the mountains, and another one from painting or cooking.

There are those who believe that life must be inherently meaningful. There is an objective purpose and meaning to life, and

which Plato said was the pursuit of the highest form of Knowledge. In Plato's view, contemplating the meaning of life *is* the meaning of life.

Life is intrinsically meaningful, worthwhile and valuable, and it is left to each individual to realize and sense the value and meaning of life. Many decisions we make regarding our career, leisure and moral dilemmas depend upon our understanding of the meaning of life. To investigate the meaning of life is to find out, in the first place, if there is a plan or pattern for the *universe*. The evolutionary theory put forward by Theosophy admits of both intelligence and pattern. The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled and animated by an endless series of Hierarchies of sentient beings or conscious Divine Powers who are agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws and they are "intelligent Beings who adjust and control evolution."

Then the question may arise: Is there a purpose to *human life*, in general? Do I exist to fulfil some purpose? Though these questions are inter-related, we are generally more worried about the latter, the personal aspect, *viz.*, does *my* life have any meaning? Surprisingly, some of the very eminent and successful people have been assailed with the feeling of meaninglessness of their lives. For instance, Count Leo Tolstoy was overwhelmed by the thought of his own death, and the death of those he cared for, as also by the transitory nature of all human achievements. He likened the fate of a human being to a traveller in an eastern tale, who is overtaken by a beast and saves himself by jumping into a waterless well. But at the bottom of the well he sees a dragon with open jaws ready to swallow him. This man can neither come out for the fear of the beast nor jump down for the fear of the dragon. So, he clutches at the twig of a wild bush growing in the cleft of the well and finds two mice nibbling at the twig he is holding, so that any time the twig could break, sending him into the jaws of the dragon. The traveller, who knows that death is inevitable, still hangs on to the bush and seeing some drops of honey on the leaves, begins to lick them. The two drops of honey in Tolstoy's life were his love for his family and the writing of books.

But as he suggests, there are people who have never concerned themselves with the meaning of life. There are those who have questioned life and experienced the hopelessness, and yet seize as many of life's pleasures as possible, ignoring the "dragon," the "beast," and the "mice." Tolstoy was dismayed by the fact that when life ends everything comes to an end with it. To some of us life may appear to be an endless cycle of repetitive activities, and a journey without a destination.

Theosophy says with sage Patanjali that the whole universe exists for the experience and emancipation of the soul. This universe does not come into existence arbitrarily but according to Law. That law is the Law of Periodicity or Cycles. The plan, the blueprint for this phenomenal universe exists in the Divine Mind and is interpreted and executed by hierarchies of intelligent divine beings. Everything in the universe is governed by the Law. Fire burns and water flows, each behaves according to its *dharma*. Man, endowed with mind and hence the power to think and choose, can go against the Law and harmony of the universe. But he could also become a Buddha, actualizing his potentialities, and raising the whole of manifestation to a higher level, ever so little. But Buddhahood or perfection—mental, moral, psychological and spiritual—cannot be achieved in one life. At the end of every life, there is assimilation and expansion of all the nobler qualities—sympathy, love for beauty, art, and the abstract things of life—in Devachan [*swarga*] so that the soul comes back enriched. No effort is lost. In fact, it is after passing through what the Hindus call eighty-four lakh *yonis*, *i.e.*, after passing through and having experience in various lower forms—*viz.*, elemental, mineral, vegetable, and animal—that the human stage is reached. "Difficult it is to obtain birth as a human being. Difficult it is to live the life of a man," says the Buddha. It is a long journey from being an ordinary human being to reaching the stage of a perfected being, a *Tathagata*, who goes out of this world with wisdom and yet returns to it out of compassion. The highest "meaning of life" is to attain to peace and bliss of *Nirvana* but to renounce it, in order to help the suffering humanity.

So, there is a meaning, pattern and plan for the universe and human life in general. To make our lives meaningful, we must try to understand the plan, see our place in it and then work towards the realization of that plan. How many of us are aware of this pattern? If aware, how many of us try to follow it? Only a few. As a result our life resembles the state described in the “Myth of Sisyphus.” It is said that Sisyphus betrayed divine secrets to mortals and for this he was condemned by the gods to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain, and the rock would roll down of its own weight. He had to once again push it up when it rolled down, thus again and again forever. It is symbolic of man’s eternal struggle, his willingness to try one more time without giving up, as also of futile and hopeless labour. So long as we have some goal to pursue, or we are engaged in the fulfilment of some desire, we find our life meaningful. But almost all our goals are transitory. When one goal is fulfilled we run after another. Generally, we believe that a person’s life is meaningful if he has devoted himself to a cause. So Gandhiji, Thoreau, Lincoln, Mother Teresa and all those with some dominant overall goal seem to have lived a meaningful life. Is the life of an ordinary person meaningless? For many of us, life is full of repetitive tasks, which we seem to be doing day-in and day-out. If we do them for their own sake, without concern for name, fame, money, power, etc., or looking upon it as useless drudgery, then those very mundane, repetitive actions would fill our life with meaning. It would then imply our own contribution in keeping up the harmonious life in the universe. Every life is meaningful, provided we change our attitude towards what life brings to us. The life of a teacher, a businessman or a sweeper could be meaningful, provided each lives his life with the aim of self-actualization and self-transcendence.

The possibility of change and the capacity to change gives meaning to human life. No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, if we regard it as an opportunity to learn from, then we

grow. The purpose of life is to learn and it is all made up of learning. It is not as if always there is *conscious learning*. Even when someone loses a near and dear one, the experience seems to cause only pain and nothing more. At times, such experience may fill one’s heart with bitterness and complaint, but it may also bring about some detachment, and a changed attitude to life. The process of “change” and “learning” is always gradual and imperceptible, but it is there in every person who is not completely insensitive.

If we could but face our life problems without grumbling or trying to run away, we are gradually drawn closer to the centre of our being. When we are close to the divine centre life acquires meaning, which no words can express. It is only when we are away from this centre that we feel vacuum, depression and hopelessness. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist, writes in his book, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, that 85 percent of the students attempting suicide at an American University, did so because life seemed meaningless. He writes: “This happens, in the midst of affluent societies and in the midst of welfare states! For too long we have been dreaming a dream from which we are now waking up; the dream that if we just improve the socio-economic situation of people, everything will be okay, people will become happy. The truth is that as the struggle for survival has subsided, the question has emerged: survival for what? Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.”

He points out that there is in each one of us, “will to meaning.” Man needs something to live for. Victor Frankl points out that there ought to be self-transcendence of human existence. “It denotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfil or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself.” (*Man’s Search for Meaning*, p. 133)

(Concluded)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

LOVE—FRIENDSHIP—AFFINITIES—I

LONELINESS—that is the badge of all our tribe. At times it becomes intense; at times it has only a numbing effect. Loneliness is part of the inner life. We leave off, or try to, the lower; we do not become accustomed to the Higher; we are in mid-air, like Trishanku. Look up his story; Longfellow has a poem about him, if I am not mistaken. Do not be frightened. This loneliness acts both in good and bad ways and we have to learn to make good use of it.

Right Loneliness of the Noble Eightfold Path is “want of pleasure in congregations of men.” But the next exercise is meditation which unfolds companionship with our Inner Ruler, followed by that with fellow pilgrims. To get away from the lower into the higher is the War; to enjoy the higher is light, peace and divine contentment which through divine discontent, urges us on to progress to perfection.

Of course companionship is necessary, and not only for ordinary people; for students there should be the cultivation of *sat-sang*. All chelas of all Masters form a band of Companions; and further, disciples of the same Guru cultivate a deeper friendship. The institution of *guru-bhais* is real and represents a grand occult truth. So, asceticism of the right type demands cultivation of the spirit of companionship. You are bound to come to that stage and it will call for considerable discrimination.

Affinities, says Judge, anon bless and anon damn. Again, H.P.B. says that love and hate both are immortal feelings. We are attracted by those we love and also those we dislike—I hope we hate no one. We have to learn to open our big hearts in a big way—love, love and love all. Draw a circle and take all in. It requires heart-wisdom and charity of mind and speech—*Shila*-harmony between our words and acts, balancing the credit and debit sides of our own Karma so that the Law does not react on us; and we learn to use the Great Law which is both Justice and Mercy. So let us act in a friendly way, never mind what anyone does. When we depart from the body

let us not leave behind anyone who dislikes us. Let us leave only friends and friendship all along the line.

Our esoteric principles demand that feeling of dislike for persons be promptly adjusted. Read and apply the principles of W.Q.J.’s article on “Friends and Enemies in the Future”; also numerous passages in his priceless *Letters That Have Helped Me*. This is essential for you, your own inner growth. Whenever and wherever and for whomever you find a feeling the reverse of loving friendliness, better to throw it out, as quickly as possible. We cannot possibly change others, however much we may advise and try to guide and help them. But ourselves we can and should transform. Spiritual transmutation is not only possible but very desirable. A major part of our inner training consists in just such a task of transmuting the rough, drossy material into sparkling diamonds. Spiritual alchemy is the real science and the soul of material alchemy.

As to likes and dislikes, loves and hates—we *have* to remove from our being this pair of the human personal character. Only a *Bodhisattva* has fully succeeded in that grand task. But we must begin. Here is an *ascetic* exercise. How to win over those who dislike us? By, first, liking them. Both mental effort and imagination have perforce to be used. This is a major trial in chelaship. Take your feelings which, so to speak, create non-understanding and/or embarrassment for you in reference to _____ or anyone else. How to begin to overcome that? You will need to see their good points, gain knowledge about those, come closer to them in and by imagination. By the way, this is one aspect of working in silence and secrecy. Then bit by bit you pass out of the dislike stage into the like stage. In the case of those you already like, expansion into love should be attempted and then impersonalization of that like and that love. This is *practising* Brotherhood. You are correct—understanding is comparatively easy; application requires the aid of imagination.

As you have the spirit of true give-and-take you are bound to gain friends and companions and devotees. Acquaintances grow into friends or drop out; so also friends cultivated and who cultivate

us become companions and these become devoted to us and we to them. You are beginning the good life of Brotherliness and so I have been writing you to cultivate the spirit of friendship. From the occult point of view the rule of discipleship seems to be that chelas go in groups and establish real companionship. Dissimilar magnetisms, like differing colours, are so mingled that a pleasing picture is created, which grows into real beauty. The Master and chela relation no doubt is strictly individualistic, but He uses other individuals to chip off our rough or sharp edges, for in the process those others get their own edges smoothed and rounded. Then there is an old song they used to sing: “Your friends are my friends and my friends are yours.” It contains another phase of this creative work in and for groups, which ultimately aids every individual in the group. So it goes.

We attract to ourselves, impersonally from the Astral Light and through persons who are our agents of Karma, love or hate vibrations. We *feel* hot and cold—it is our body in relationship to the earth’s temperature rooted in the earth’s magnetism, etc. The same about emotional vibrations. The Buddha did not feel the hate when Devadatta vibrated the full force of hatred. We *feel* and respond to kindness or to cruelty and feel elevated or depressed. So it is we. This is nothing new and we all know it; but metaphysically it is better to register the nature of this phenomenon. Also, it is understandable why resentment arises in us when resentful vibrations attack us. Now, “Resist not evil” offers an ascetic exercise to be used *subjectively*. It is within our own personal life that we have to practise not to resent resentment. We do not will; will is forgotten, but that means that memory-will is weak. Vigilance is will of memory—remembrance. All this is simple to understand, difficult to apply. And yet we must apply. In what measure? My dear, in full measure.

Kinships will not be marred if hearts are true. Points of view are bound to differ. It is a scientific fact that no two persons see the same view they are beholding with the same accuracy or understanding. If

that be so on the physical plane, how much more it must be so on the mind-heart plane! Let us trust each other, have faith in the *good* of each other’s minds (for it is in lower Manas that bickerings, etc., arise), seek what unites and eschew what divides, and above all be patient with each other. There is occult wisdom in one of the sonnets of Shakespeare on love. Judge’s phrase, “Hold grimly on,” has numerous applications. Of course egotism is the source of troubles, dislikes and hatreds at every turn and at every stage. To settle or sink personal differences in the larger interests of our Great Work is an art in itself, which many, even among our students, have not acquired. To succeed in this with one or half-a-dozen we need to practise this forbearance and fortitude with all and sundry. If we develop amicability, and so adaptability, in our own character, two-thirds of our work is done; not only for our own self but for the Cause also.

To forgive and forget is the practical technique to be employed for the application of compassion in the heart. A similar connection there is between love and understanding: the latter is born of the former; no love, no real understanding. But one may have love and not understand because of absence of philosophy and of knowledge.

(To be continued)

THOSE who love Nature can never be dull. They may have other temptations; but at least they will run no risk of being beguiled, by ennui, idleness, or want of occupation, “to buy the merry madness of an hour with the long penitence of after-time.” The love of Nature, again, helps us greatly to keep ourselves free from those mean and petty cares which interfere so much with calm and peace of mind. It turns “every ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice,” and brightens life until it becomes almost like a fairy-tale.

—JOHN LUBBOCK

THE SUN—PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

III

THE TENTH sign of the Zodiac is Capricornus or *Makaram*. It may be taken to represent both Microcosm (Man) and Macrocosm (Cosmos). T. Subba Row explains that *Ma* means five and *kara* means hands or sides, in Sanskrit. Hence *Makara* means five-sided figure or Pentagon. This sign is intended to represent the faces of the universe and indicates that the universe is bounded by *Pentagons*. On p. 344 (*S.D.*, I) we read that the concrete or physical or phenomenal world is constructed based on the geometrical figure of a dodecahedron, as given in Plato's *Timaeus*. Dodecahedron means twelve-sided figure or made up of twelve regular pentagons.

The Sun enters the sign of Capricornus or *Makara* around December 21st, the time of winter solstice. However, except for the initiated, no one knows the real mystic connection that exists between the names *Makara* and *Kumara*. *Makara* is an anagram of *Kumara*. In the article, "On the New Year" H.P.B. writes that it is January the 4th which ought to be selected by the Theosophists as their New Year. "For ages the 4th of January has been sacred to Mercury-Buddha or Thoth Hermes," the God of wisdom. The *Kumaras*, it is stated, incarnated in mankind under the tenth sign of the Zodiac. This refers to what happened in the course of human evolution. Theosophy teaches that there was a time in the course of evolution when a man in form was devoid of mind. However, he had developed a brain that was of much *better* and *deeper* capacity than that of any other animal. Man was given the light of mind by the Divine Beings—*Manasaputras* or *Kumaras*—in a manner comparable to one lighted candle lighting many others. As a result, man was endowed with self-consciousness and with the power to think and choose. After activating the human mind, these beings took upon themselves the duty of teaching this infant humanity. They taught, among other things, such sciences and arts as mathematics, astronomy, architecture, irrigation, and the use of fire, as also spiritual knowledge.

This "lighting up of Manas" is connected with the month of January, which is under the sign of Capricornus or *Makara*, and is also connected with the *Kumaras*. The sign of *Makara* (Capricornus) is thus connected with the birth of the spiritual "microcosm." H.P.B. sums it up thus: "So *Makaram* or *Panchakaram* means a Pentagon—the five-pointed star or pentagon representing the five limbs of man... What is the meaning and the reason of this figure? Because, *Manas* is the *fifth* principle, and because the pentagon is the symbol of Man—not only of the five-limbed but rather of the *thinking, conscious* MAN" (*S.D.*, II, 576 & fn.). The principles of Kama (desire) and Manas (mind) are closely linked with this festival. *Makara* is the emblem of Kamadeva, who is the god of true love or spiritual compassion. Makaraketu is one of the names of Kamadeva. Compassion comes to birth and expression only when knowledge is obtained and when the higher mind illuminates the lower animal nature.

In India, the Sun is referred to by various names, which represent different aspects or characteristics of the Sun. Aditya means "one with splendour." Mitra or Mithra means "the great luminous friend of all mankind." According to the *Theosophical Glossary*, Mithra is an ancient Iranian deity, a sun-god, and is lion-headed. The Persian Mithra is supposed to have driven out of heaven, Ahriman, who represents evil and lower human principles. Therefore, Mithra represents a kind of Messiah, who is expected to return as a judge of men. Mithra represents the highest Occultism so that the hidden or esoteric doctrines were expounded during Mithraic mysteries of initiation. In the article, "The Mithra Worship," we read that the Spiritual man is Mithra, the Sun. Mithra is shown as the liberated man, having killed the animal passions. During Mithraic mysteries, the candidate was taught to subdue his animal Self. (*Lucifer*, February 1889)

Vivasvat means the bright one. Manu is a son of Vivasvat and is connected with humanity. Hence, through Manu, Vivasvat is considered an ancestor of humanity. Shri Krishna says in the opening

verses of the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, “I taught this exhaustless doctrine of Yoga to Vivasvat, Vivasvat communicated it to Manu, and Manu made it known unto Ikshawaku...until at length in the course of time the mighty art was lost.” In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* Mr. Judge remarks that Vivasvat is a name for the Sun, and a great truth is hidden behind it. Vivasvat, the Sun, represents a Being who was appointed to help and guide the human race at its beginning. That is because in prior periods of evolution this “Being,” gained knowledge and perfection, so as to become as a god. Krishna, the Supreme Spirit is said to teach this Being. In the early part of new *manvantara* a being descends among men and imparts certain ideas and aspirations which reverberate through all the succeeding ages until the time of general dissolution. This “Being” represents the first manifestation of divine wisdom at the beginning of evolution, and that is why said to be taught by the Supreme Spirit or Krishna. After this Being retires, he leaves spiritual succession to Manu and his son Ikshawaku, who founded the line of Solar kings. These Solar kings were men of supreme knowledge, who ruled humanity as Adept-kings.

Pushan is a Vedic solar deity, and one of the Adityas. He is the god responsible for journeys and feeding of the cattle. He was a psychopomp (soul guide), conducting souls to the other world. Pushan refers to the Sun as an illuminator that helped the Devas (gods) to achieve victory over Asuras, who use darkness. According to the *Theosophical Glossary*, Pushan is a Vedic deity, and the name of the Sun, who is considered to be the “Nourisher,” and the feeder of all (helpless) beings. We read in *Taittiriya Brahmana* that “when Prajapati (progenitor) formed living beings, Pushan nourished them.” This is the “same mysterious force that nourished the foetus and unborn babe, by *Osmosis*, and which is called the ‘atmospheric (or *akasic*) nurse,’ and the ‘father nourisher.’” Likewise, when the first race humanity with ethereal, astral forms, was evolved by lunar pitris, it is “Pushan who fed the primaeval man.”

Inedia is Latin for “fasting” or breatharianism, and it is the belief

that food, and in some cases water, are not necessary for survival, and that humans can be sustained by only *prana* or vital life force. Since sunlight is considered to be the main source of *prana*, some practitioners believe that it is possible for a person to survive on sunlight alone. In recent times, we have an instance of a 64-year-old Gujarati mechanical engineer, Hira Ratan Manek, who survived only on boiled water and sunlight for 411 days. The rationale of such phenomena is given to us in a succinct statement in the *Supplement to The Theosophist* for December 1883 (p. 32): “*Akasa* is the mother of all phenomena and the source of nourishment of him who knows how to use it.”

In the article, “The Allegorical Umbrella,” Mr. Judge refers to the Upanishadic invocation, asking Pushan to reveal the real or Spiritual Sun, which is covered over by the physical sun. There is an influence or power in the sun which can be drawn by the mystic for the benefit of humanity. We have become too materialistic and therefore have lost the knowledge which was possessed by our forefathers, who knew how to draw forth through the visible Sun the forces from the True Sun. “This was well known in ancient Chaldea, and also to the old Chinese astronomers; the latter had certain instruments which they used for the purpose of concentrating particular rays of sunlight as yet unknown to modern science,” writes Mr. Judge.

There are thousands of rays of the Sun but among them seven rays are the most important. “The names of the Seven Rays—which are, Sushumna, Harikesa, Viswakarman, Viswatryarchas, Sannadha, Sarvavasu and Swaraj—are all mystical, and each has its distinct application in a distinct state of consciousness, for occult purposes.” The *Sushumna* ray lights up the moon, and is also cherished by the initiated Yogis. (*S.D.*, I, 523 fn.)

As regards the moon being fed by the Sushumna ray of the Sun, in a footnote to verse 236, in *Vishnu Purana* (Book II, Chapter XI), Professor Wilson remarks that the Vayu, Linga and Matsya Puranas specify several other rays of the Sun of which the principal seven

rays supply heat severally to the moon, the stars, and to Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

The Sushumna ray of the sun lights up and feeds the moon, and seems to carry “nervous ether” or animal vitality. Our earth is much affected by Moon. Dr. Richardson points out that animal vitality or “Nervous Ether” is diffused in all nature. The animal tissues only absorb it according to their more or less morbid or healthy state. It descends in a larger supply to vegetation through the *Sushumna* ray of the Sun, which lights and feeds the moon. It is through the moon’s beams that the animal vitality penetrates man and animal, more during their sleep and rest, than when they are full of activity. It accumulates in the nervous centres during sleep, bringing them, to their due tone, and therewith raising the muscles to awakening and renewed life. (*S.D.*, I, 537-38)

The footnote on p. 515 (*S.D.*, I) says that these seven rays form the physical basis for the ether of science. In *Transactions*, we read that ether of science is the grossest aspect of Akasa, and it is the seventh principle of the astral light, and it is three degrees higher than radiant matter. The quality of matter of the rays of the Sun, though described as forming a physical basis, must not be of the nature of the matter known to us, but must be still finer. Thus, the seven rays of the sun seem to be constituted of still grosser matter than the ether of science, but more ethereal than matter known to us and along with this ether, it forms the basis in which various forces, light, heat, electricity, in their subtler aspects, correlate to produce their physical effects on earth. We are told that Akasa must be seen as a basis in which higher aspects of these forces, correlate to produce psychic and spiritual effects on earth.

Can we regard the seven rays of the Sun to represent seven creative rays or seven creative hosts? In the Vedas, the seven rays of Surya (the Sun) are made parallel to the Seven Worlds (of every planetary chain), to the seven rivers of heaven and earth, the former being the seven creative Hosts, and the latter the Seven men, or primitive human groups (*S.D.*, II, 605). Thus, the seven rays of the

Sun are shown to correspond with seven globes of planetary chains, which are on four *rupa* (astral) planes, and also with seven creative rays or hierarchies of creative powers, and seven men seems to refer to Seven Primeval Men (*S.D.*, II, 2), which in turn may refer to “Kings of Edom” or First Root Race humanity with its seven sub-races, and were shadows of the Shadows of the Lords or Lunar Pitris. At the cosmic level, we can compare seven rays of the sun with seven creative forces from the manifested logos. In *Transactions* we read that the AH-HIs are the seven primordial rays which emanate from the First Logos which is *triple* yet one in essence.

Why Sushumna ray of the Sun feeds the moon with light, and why is that ray cherished by the Yogis? The answer given is that those Yogis knew about the occult properties of light and also the correlation of light with the mental, psychic and spiritual forces. It becomes clear if we keep in mind that the Sun is dual, physical and spiritual. The physical is merely the window through which light, life and power of the Central Spiritual Sun is radiated. The spiritual nature becomes somewhat clear when we read that the *Gandharvas* of the Vedas are the beings who reveal the secrets of heaven and divine truths to mortals. *Cosmically*, they represent the collective powers of the solar fire and constitute solar forces. *Psychically*, they represent the intelligence residing in the *Sushumna* ray of the Sun. *Mystically*, they represent the occult force in the Soma, the Moon as well as in the Soma plant. (*S.D.*, I, 523)

According to the explanation given on p. 584 (*S.D.*, II), the *Gandharvas* may well represent the *manasaputras*. Further, the Cherubim and Seraphim, etc. of the Bible, are connected with the *Gandharvas*, *Kinnaras*, etc. of the Hindu Pantheon and they, in turn, are connected with the Four Maharajas, that preside over four cardinal points and also the Karma of Humanity, and are the Rectors or Regents of Sun, Moon, Venus and Mercury. H.P.B. points out that *Gandharvas*, *Vidyadharas*, and even *Apsaras*, are benevolent and if properly approached they are willing to impart to men useful knowledge of arts and sciences.

Though we ask for the light of the true sun or Higher Self to shine down and illuminate, it is also true that this light is so intensely powerful that if a struggling disciple were to be suddenly introduced to its presence unprepared, he would be consumed both body and soul. A mystic can draw forth the power or influence in the sun and use it for beneficent purposes. However, this power is obscured or hidden by a cover or umbrella, for the protection of ordinary humanity. It is an *allegorical* umbrella placed beneath the true Sun. The ribs of this umbrella are the Rishis, or Adepts or Mahatmas. The handle of this umbrella is in every man's hand. Through the cover, entire humanity experiences the beneficent influence of the true Sun, in terms of light, life, knowledge and power, without the risk of being consumed. However, when one aspires to be a disciple and lives the higher life in real earnest, he begins to separate himself from the mass of humanity and connects himself, in a more or less definite manner with the ribs, *i.e.*, with one of the Adepts. Like water trickles down in a small or big stream from the points of the ribs of the umbrella, so also, spiritual influences pour out from the Adepts who form the frame of the protecting cover. However, each one also holds the handle of the umbrella through which he can directly receive the influence coming from the *true Sun* when he attempts to rise to his divine nature during meditation.

(Concluded)

SOCIETY as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and sweet valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt; she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitterness make me whole.

—OSCAR WILDE

“THE CHILD IS FATHER OF THE MAN”

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the epigrammatic phrase which appears in the famous poem, *My Heart Leaps Up*, of William Wordsworth continues to captivate the minds of the men of letters, psychologists, and common people alike. The general opinion is that the meaning of the phrase is suggested in the context and the theme of the poem. The theme seems to be a portrayal of the natural innocence and piety of little children which, if preserved in its purity when the child grows into manhood, will be the noblest virtue of man, “natural piety,” that makes him truly human, and absence of which is equivalent to the death of humanism.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old.
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

The theme is also suggestive of the fact that the personality of a man is shaped to a large extent by the kind of impressions made on the tender mind when he was a child, derived from family and social environment and education. There have been debates among psychologists, geneticists, and educationists whether it is the innate potentialities with which the child is naturally endowed when it is born which determine the character of the man it grows up to be, or by the nurturing of intelligence and sensibilities of the child through education and emulation. The general consensus is that it is not either nature alone or nurture alone but that both factors come into play in shaping the human personality. Much has been talked about, in various forums, the importance of nurturing young minds in the development of human potential in the program of social

development and nation-building. In modern pedagogy, however, not much attention is bestowed on the phenomenon of born geniuses, child prodigies, innate talents children sometimes exhibit, because of the general prevalence of the narrow view of the human being as just a biological entity. But once the reality of the human being as a soul, not just the physical body, and of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation, is recognized and understood, the whole field of education becomes vastly extended comprehending the karmic cause of the child's nature and potentiality, a knowledge of which helps in shaping and building the character of individuals not only for just one life but for eternity through right education.

Numerous are instances of men and women we meet with in everyday life whose certain traits of character and attitudes are seen to be the result of specific experiences and impressions made on the plastic minds in their childhood. Negative and unhealthy as well as positive and healthy behavioural and attitudinal traits of adulthood are in many cases traceable to childhood experiences—though the influence of the past Karmic baggage the soul has brought into the present life is a significant factor that cannot be overlooked. The relative predominance or the power of the two influences and the resultant outcome of the interplay of both in shaping individual human character is very complex. A wise man with insight into the working of the Karmic law alone is capable of ascertaining the true cause of any particular human situation and prescribe the best course of action and training in the present that harmonizes the two influences—of nature and nurture—for a better future and higher progress in the long run.

Appreciation of this truism is the foundation of true education, which, unfortunately, is lacking at the present time. “Again, school training is of the very greatest importance in forming character, especially in its moral bearing,” says the Teacher, H.P.B. (*The key to Theosophy*, p. 264, Indian edition, 1987). Imparting simple truths of life to children, such as unity and interdependence of all life, that we are souls and not just bodies, that we reap the consequences of

our actions, an awareness of which reveal to us our responsibility not only towards our fellowmen but to the beautiful kingdoms of nature as well, and so on, will have a profound influence in their adult life. These truisms could be impressed on children's minds with imaginative illustrations, storytelling, reading simple ethical precepts of great Teachers of the world, such as Dhammapada, etc., and practically applied by doing away with the competitive spirit in school education and substituting it with inculcation of an attitude of concern for and helping weaker brethren, mutual help, love and reverence for the natural world. Teachers themselves need to have been through Theosophical education and be well-grounded in Theosophical life, whom children will naturally look up to and try to emulate. The prospect of such a system of education coming into being may seem dim at the present time, yet it was prevalent in ancient India, and will certainly be revived with the spread of Theosophical ideas. Plato says in Book IV of his magnum opus, *The Republic*, that if proper system of education in its moral bearing founded on true philosophy is established there will be no necessity to enact laws of business transactions, civic behaviour, right family relationships because good and worthy men find out most of them such as ought to be established by law, and live up to them unbidden.

In the Laws of Manu there is a saying that the son saves his father (*pitara*) from the hell called *puth*, and that, therefore, he, the son, is called *putra* (Chapter 9, verse 138). Reading in the context of the subsequent verses it seems to imply that the act of saving the parent from hell by the son relates to the belief that the manes would sink into hell if their direct male progeny fail to offer them annually, in proper season, cake and water. Suffice it to say, for the present purpose, that the practice of the ritual is now another superstition among many others as the knowledge of the spirit of the practice found in the occult laws of post-mortem state of disembodied soul is lost. Nevertheless, there may yet be another meaning to the verse, an inkling to which is suggested by the aphoristic saying in the poem under consideration.

Life and circumstances of everyone is the just outcome of the thoughts and acts of oneself performed in the past lives on earth and is bound thereby—to a self-made destiny. But one need not be a passive and helpless slave of destiny, because everyone is endowed with the power of spiritual discrimination to know good from evil, right from wrong, the true from the false, and the free will to choose and act in ways that pave the way for a brighter morrow and even cleave the bonds of Karma and liberate the soul from the involuntary cycles of birth and death. The Karmic merit that accrues to the one who strives to follow the dictates of divine conscience saves him from the direful consequences of living merely by the exigencies of personal desires, in which, if persisted life after life, would end in the dreadful fate of annihilation of personal self. The spiritual fruit, a Karmic merit, of the life of a man lived by the behests of the Law of Virtue and mandate of the Higher Self is allegorically referred to as his “Son,” who saves him, the “father,” from slipping into a downward course of negative mental states called hells. The true meaning of the popular belief among the Hindus that the man who dies without begetting a son goes to hell becomes comprehensible, and superstition is abated.

IN MODERN civilization individuals whose conduct is inspired by a moral ideal are very seldom encountered. However, such individuals still exist. We cannot help noticing their aspect when we meet them. Moral beauty is an exceptional and very striking phenomenon. He who has contemplated it but once never forgets its aspect. This form of beauty is far more impressive than the beauty of nature and of science. It gives to those who possess its divine gifts, a strange, an inexplicable power. It increases the strength of intellect. It established peace among men. Much more than science, art, and religious rites, moral beauty is the basis of civilization.

—ALEXIS CARREL

THE MORAL LAW OF COMPENSATION

It is not, therefore, karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we, who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that Harmony depends, or—break them.

—*The Secret Doctrine* (I, 643)

NATURE and man evolve on the basis of the great law of Karma—action and reaction, cause and effect. It is not a mechanical but a divine law, universal and impersonal, just and merciful. Each cause produces its legitimate effect in course of time; therefore, the motion of the law is cyclic. It moves in spirals. The moral law operates only in the human kingdom, and it is the highest aspect of the law. The power of thought and choice, will and volition, therefore of morals, pertains to man alone. Morality does not apply to the lower kingdoms of nature. Though consciousness functions in all at different levels, none except man possesses self-consciousness. Therefore, man alone is a morally responsible being. He can raise himself to the highest state of becoming a guardian of the law, or allow himself to be dragged down to the level of a beast. “Verily there is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life” (*S.D.*, I, 643-44). This statement encourages the individual to endeavour along right lines, to trust the law cheerfully and work in harmony with it.

The world is plunged in sorrow and suffering because people do not understand the moral law, how it works from within, without, how it can be followed on the basis of the eternal verities, so that the morality can be raised to a higher standard. It is necessary to do so because morals belong to the permanent aspect of ourselves, and it is this alone which one takes with him after the death of the physical body. Nothing else accompanies the soul to the heaven world, because the soul needs only the highest ideas and the noblest feelings to dwell upon during the interval between two incarnations. Therefore, it is necessary to refine the tendencies of mind and heart so as to beautify the character.

When an old soul takes birth in a new body, he returns from the “land of the gods” and is pure like a dew-drop of heaven. He brings with him his past tendencies, good, bad and indifferent, and they begin to fructify as the body grows, the consciousness develops, and the soul gets more and more entangled in the muddy torrents of earthly existence. It is believed that this is his fate or destiny and that there is no way out of it. That is a completely wrong attitude. None else compels; each one for himself creates his own destiny, and therein lies his own resistibility. There is the other aspect of the moral law, and that is the free will in man. At every step he can choose and determine for himself his own course of action along right or wrong lines.

This law is also known as the law of ethical causation. Human beings generate causes every moment of their lives, but not deliberately, willfully and self-consciously. They act impulsively, not in harmony with the law, and therefore suffer evil consequences. For instance, if without planning, one plunges into the ocean on a very stormy day, and succumbs to the fury of the waves, is it the fault of the ocean? Certainly not. This teaches us how necessary it is always to wait and think and plan before taking a step; to work from within, without. “In the ‘Great Journey,’ causes sown each hour bear each its harvest of effects, for rigid Justice rules the World,” says *The Voice of the Silence*.

With a correct concept of God, Law and Evolution, it is possible to transform one’s life for the better. The most important aspect of the moral law is one’s attitude in the present. Everyone has lived and acted in the past. The law brings the results, pleasant or painful. How do we behave during those experiences? Some would try to learn the lesson with cheerfulness. Others would murmur and grumble and enhance the suffering and create wrong causes to produce worse effects. So, it is individual responsibility in every case. It should be understood that the success or failure of each one affects his fellow pilgrims as well as himself because each one is his brother’s keeper, and then one would stop to think on the correct

basis before acting, and take a step in the right direction always.

Lord Buddha gave five rules which would help to raise the moral standard: Kill not, steal not, lie not, drug not, lust not. There is so much corruption among all classes of people that these rules are really worth practicing to ennoble our character. Patanjali considers them as universal great duties, to be daily fulfilled. How they would produce beneficent results is also pointed out. (*Yoga Aphorisms*, pp. 29-31)

Light on the Path states: “Desire to sow no seed for your own harvesting; desire only to sow that seed the fruit of which shall feed the world. You are a part of the world; in giving it food you feed yourself.” This is the way to act for and as the Self of all creatures. The law of interdependence operates in the whole world, and if the good of others is kept in mind, the world situation would naturally improve.

The quotation from *The Secret Doctrine* given at the beginning of this article tells us how the only decree of the Law of Karma is that there should be absolute harmony in the material world as there is in the spiritual. There peace and joy reign supreme. It is here only that there are disturbances on all planes caused by human beings themselves because they work against the laws of nature. When pain and suffering come, they do not realize that these are of their own making and not any punishment sent by God or man, for the law neither rewards nor punishes; it restores the broken harmony and adjusts equitably. To learn to work with the law is a necessity of life. To sow the seeds in the proper soil, in the proper season, and nurture them carefully means working with the law. To sow them without due preparation, at the wrong time, means working against the law. Then a good harvest cannot be expected and no one else can be blamed for it.

If we want the peace and joy of the heaven world on this earth full of misery, the only way is to “Help nature and work on with her; and nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Archaeologists have found a biological explanation for the deification of the hamadryas baboons in ancient Egyptian culture, based on their studies of living and mummified baboons. In the British Museum, there is a mummy of *Papio hamadryas*, the sacred baboon, recovered from the Temple of Khons in Luxor, Egypt and it dates back to the New Kingdom period, from 1550 B.C. to 1069 B.C. Since nearly 3150 B.C. one comes across several examples of hamadryas baboons depicted in ancient Egyptian art and religion. For instance, Tutankhamun had a necklace decorated with baboons that are seen adoring the sun. Besides baboons, Egyptians revered other animals by associating them with various gods. Hamadryas baboons are considered to be an embodiment of Thoth, the god of the moon and of wisdom, and adviser to Ra, the god of the sun. Likewise, the jackal is associated with Anubis, the god of death, and the falcon with Horus, the god of the sky. Interestingly, baboons are the only animals in the Egyptian pantheon that are not native to Egypt but have been imported.

Scholars studied the way in which these baboons were depicted in Egyptian art. In one form, a baboon is shown sitting with its hands on its knees and a disc representing the moon placed over his head. In the second form, the male baboon is seen with its arms raised and with palms upturned towards Ra, the sun god, in a gesture of adoration. In the Pyramid Texts, the baboon is described as the beloved son of Ra. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, we find the resurrected person saying, “I have sung and praised the Sun-disc. I have joined the baboons, and I am one of them.”

A few years back, an Egyptologist sought to explain this connection between baboons and Ra, by suggesting that when the ancient Egyptians saw the baboons face the rising sun to warm themselves, they probably interpreted this behaviour as their welcoming the sun. In the past few years, primate studies have shown that basking in the sun is related to both digestion and warming of the body. The microbes found in primate intestines play an important

role in digesting plant matter, so that the rise in body temperature spurs microbe activity, and that in turn increases the absorption of the nutrients by the intestine. The heat generated by digestion can further help in warming the body. Therefore, depending upon where they live and what they eat, some primate species should bask in the sun more than others. For instance, hamadryas baboons eat more leafy plant tissues than other species of baboons, called olive baboons; which means their diet is high in fibre. This may explain why “Egyptians venerated *P. hamadryas* over *P. Anubis*: perhaps its dietary ecology produced morning behaviours that resonated more strongly with their religious beliefs,” writes Nathaniel J. Dominy, a primatologist and evolutionary biologist at Dartmouth College. (*Scientific American*, November 2021)

Each animal has symbolic significance. At times, it is the qualities of the animal that made it unique, leading to its deification and protection. The Egyptians mummified some animals because they were considered to be the living representatives of a god. For instance, a cat was sacred to goddess Basht (or Pasht), Hawk to god Horus and Ibis to god Thoth. The Egyptian goddess Pasht is a cat-headed goddess and represents the moon. Mr. Gerald Massey says that when the Egyptians portrayed the moon as the cat, it was not because they saw any similarity between the moon and the cat, but because “they had observed the simple fact that the cat saw in the dark, and that her eyes became full-orbed, and grew most luminous by night. The moon was the *seer* by night in heaven, and the cat was its equivalent on the earth.” (*S.D.*, I, 304)

In *The Theosophical Glossary*, we read that “the ‘Cynocephalus’ (*Simía hamadryas*), was not an ape-headed god, but a dog-headed baboon from upper Egypt. The latter, whose sacred city was Hermopolis, was sacred to the lunar deities and Thoth-Hermes, hence an emblem of secret wisdom—as was Hanuman, the monkey-god of India, and later, the elephant-headed Ganesha. The mission of the Cynocephalus was to show the way for the Dead to the Seat of Judgment and Osiris, whereas the ape-gods were all phallic.”

Toth has been described as the master of Cynocephalus “the dog-headed ape who stood in Egypt as a living symbol and remembrance of the Third Root-Race.” It may be the reminder that in the Third Root-Race, after the Hermaphrodite man separated into sexes, he was still devoid of mind. Some of them imitated animals and uniting with huge she-animals (unnatural union), gave rise to Anthropoid Apes. It was in the last part of the Third Root-Race, some Eighteen million years ago, that *Kumaras*, the sons of Siva, lighted up the mind of man, endowing man with the powers to think, to choose, and also self-consciousness.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 388) we read that Cynocephalus, the dog-headed ape, was a glyph to symbolise the sun and moon. When Cynocephalus carries the Caduceus, the Crescent or the Lotus, he is “philosophical” Mercury. All three symbols represent Wisdom and therefore at that time, Cynocephalus becomes a symbol of sacred and secret Wisdom. But when he is shown with a reed or a roll of parchment, he is like Thoth-Hermes and an advisor to Isis. “Thoth is the recorder and the judge...who records the thoughts, words and deeds of men and weighs them in the balance, liken him to the type of the esoteric *Lipikas*.” Like Cynocephalus, Hanuman is also the secretary and advisor to Rama, as he also is supposed to represent secret wisdom. “*Hanuman* was neither a human being nor a monkey: it is one of the powers of the 7th principle [*Atman*] of man (Rama),” writes H.P.B.

Why do we grieve? The feeling of loss is so overpowering that the one suffering from the loss of a near and dear one, finds it hard to accept the words of Alfred Tennyson, “It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.” After the loss of a loved one, people not only experience emotional pain but also suffer from health problems, and some are known to die within weeks and months following the loss, says Randolph Nesse at Arizona State University. Clearly, grief could prove so debilitating that one is unable

to cope with life. If evolution is concerned with survival, why did we evolve this trait? argues Nesse.

According to one explanation, this grieving is a reflection of what happens during our childhood. When we are young and vulnerable, we tend to stay close to others, especially parents, because there is an urge for survival. When children are separated from their mothers, they protest intensely and are withdrawn. That is what happens in the case of grieving people, and is corroborated by neuroimaging studies.

During the protest phase, there is “searching” behaviour observed in grieving people, wherein there is a need to find or see the body and even believing in ghosts, which may be correlated to the behaviour from the hunter-gatherer period. As a hunter-gatherer, if one were to lose his child, he would keep searching for weeks and months, and not easily give up. Likewise, the withdrawal phase has its own value, as it allows a grieving person to disconnect from the past and look to the future. In evolutionary terms, from grieving our loss, we move on to cutting our losses, says John Wilson at York St. John University in the United Kingdom.

Grief carries survival value in terms of teaching lessons. A mother whose child died by drowning because she allowed it to play very close to the sea, will never make the same mistake again, and other mothers sharing her grief will also learn the lesson. However, though grief brings such survival benefits, not all of us experience grief with the same intensity. Moreover, there are those who look upon grief as an accidental “epiphenomenon” resulting from bonding behaviours. However, that does not seem likely. According to Randolph Nesse, people who do not experience [any kind of] pain are normally dead by the time they reach their thirties, writes Catherine de Lange. (*New Scientist*, November 20, 2021)

It is surprising but true that there is healing power in grieving. When one comes to terms with grief, and at first, vaguely senses the hidden purpose behind the loss and the trauma, one enters into a new phase of life. One may learn to feel others’ woes and to

sympathize truly. With a few exceptions, one emerges out of sorrow a more thoughtful and stronger individual.

Evolution is not just concerned with survival but has more to do with evolving and growing. We grow and evolve physically, intellectually and spiritually. The Sanskrit term for experience is *anubhava*, i.e., becoming (something different) as a sequel to some event. Theosophy teaches that in the scheme of evolution it is necessary for the Ego, the “eternal pilgrim,” to have gained experience, by passing through the various kingdoms of nature—mineral, vegetable, animal and human. Experience works as an impulse to evolution. All the general experiences, involving, pleasure and pain, success and failure, gain and loss, are necessary because inevitable.

In grief and pain, there is a possibility of growth. Growth involves change and how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? A spiritual person is affected by pleasure and pain but does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions in any way. To reach this state we have to keep constant awareness of who we really are. Our psychological base of support is our higher nature, which gives us a true sense of “I am I.” When there is a sudden surge of emotion, such that it is all centred in one feeling, then our awareness of “I am I” goes awry and falls, so to speak, outside the base of support. We begin to identify ourselves with the thing we are contemplating. As a result, people go mad with grief or with sudden good news.

The *Gita* recommends meditation on death and decay, because when we realize that there is that in us all, the immortal and all-powerful Ego, of which the body is an instrument for gaining experience, and which survives the death of the body, we are better prepared to face death and loss. There is this useful reflection on death, from the pamphlet “What is Death?” which provides philosophical basis and help in coping with the death of a dear one: “In spite of the fact that you have suffered and grown hopeless because of your recent loss, a new cycle of growth and understanding

can be before you... What was it that you loved of this Being who has passed—the body? Or was it the Life, the Consciousness, the soul that used it? You knew that individual through all its changes of body, of which there were so many. This in itself is proof that it was not the body but something else you loved. And is that Soul which you loved now dead? How can you say so—you who persist through every change of form! That which lives and thinks in you is the ‘Eternal Pilgrim,’ for him there is no beginning and no end, however many changes of body and of mind you use. Nothing is ever lost. This losing of yours is nothing but loss of physical contact for a little while....”

Why should we be visiting temples and places of pilgrimage? We are mistaken if we think that by merely going to a temple and praying there we can go to heaven or attain to moksha or liberation. Children left to themselves will play and have fun, but by attending school regularly their minds turn towards studies. Likewise, our minds are normally focused outside, ever seeking sense pleasures, but temples and pilgrimages help us to focus it within, towards God. “Even the mind of a pleasure-loving man gets elevated and purified with thoughts of the Supreme when he enters the temple, sees the enchanting images and hears the devotees singing hymns,” says Swami Tapovan Maharaj. The idol in the temple represents God, the Supreme Spirit. It is true that the Supreme Spirit is present everywhere, but most of us find it difficult to contemplate on the Supreme Spirit, and hence temples and places of pilgrimage help us to purify the mind and actions and fit us to take the next higher step.

Some visit the temple for the fulfilment of their desires; others may go for the purification of the mind or for attaining to supreme knowledge. But a spiritually wise or realised person, a *Jnani*, has nothing more to attain, and yet for the benefit and wellbeing of the world he continues performing such auspicious actions. When he walks the prescribed path, it becomes a lesson and a blessing to others. Since one attains to knowledge and Self-Realisation by the

blessings of the divine, it will be ingratitude on our part, if we forget that God after Realisation. Hence, even *Jnanis* visit temples and pilgrim sites. “Their presence sets an example and showers auspiciousness on all,” writes Swami Tapovan Maharaj, the Param Guru of Chinmaya Mission. (*The Times of India*, December 13, 2021)

Temples, mosques, synagogues and churches may all be regarded as “space” created for the divine by human beings. They are looked upon as links between God and Man, between earthly life and divine life. Temples have been looked upon by the ancients as energy centres. They were created as powerful spaces where an individual could imbibe the enshrined energies, and that is why it is recommended that after offering prayers and worship, one should sit silently for some time in the temple. “The places of pilgrimage are centers of spiritual force from which radiate elevating influences. . . . It is asserted by many, indeed, that at most of the famous places of pilgrimage there is an Adept [a spiritually wise being], who is ready always to give some mead of spiritual insight and assistance to those of pure heart who may go there,” writes Mr. Judge. In the East, the life of man is held to be a pilgrimage, and man is called an Eternal Pilgrim. Each one of us is a pilgrim soul, a spark detached from divine fire. Through our earthly lives, we are striving to gain back our purity and spirituality, which we have lost, so as to become worthy of merging back into the divine fire from which we have emerged.

In larger temples, the *garbhagriha* or the *Sanctum Sanctorum* representing the Highest Deity is usually surrounded by a circumambulatory path, for the devotee to walk around, called *Pradakshina* or *Parikrama*, and is the reminder that God is the centre, source and essence of our lives, so that one must perform one’s daily activities, keeping the divine in view. Our thoughts and actions must always be centred in God.