

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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GANESA—THE LORD OF WISDOM

IN India, Lord Ganesa is sometimes invoked before beginning anything auspicious, such as housewarming, starting a new business, etc., so as to avoid hindrances. He is called *Vidhnharta* (remover of obstacles) and *Buddhidata* (god of learning or wisdom). A child learning to write is first taught to write, “*Om Shri Ganeshay Namah*” (Salutations to Lord Ganesa). *Gana* means elementals and *Isa* means Lord. He is the lord of all beings and also the commander of faculties and powers, because spiritual wisdom is the controller of all the lower powers and faculties. When the use of these powers is guided by spiritual knowledge, auspicious results follow. That is why in the Bible it is said: “Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all else will be added unto you.” He is called *Vinayaka* or supreme leader, and *Gajanana*, or elephant-faced.

Ganesa is considered to be the embodiment of AUM, and represents the First Cause. With the sound of AUM resounding through the Universe, Ganesa appears first, at the dawn of a new Manvantara, and it is he who summons Brahma, Vishnu and Siva to create, preserve, destroy and regenerate the Universe. Thus, it is said that Brahma had to meditate on Ganesa or AUM to be able to create the Universe.

There are various legends associated with the birth of Ganesa and his elephant head. In *Matsya Purana* Ganesa is shown to be the child born of the sweat and dust on Parvati’s body. After creating

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this child, Parvati sat for a bath and told Ganesa to guard the entrance, with strict instructions not to allow *anyone* to enter. Siva, the consort of Parvati, who was away, returned and did not recognize this new being to be his son, and therefore on his refusal to allow him entry, Siva being “Siva-rudra,” beheaded him. But when he came to know that the being guarding the entrance was his son, he ordered that the head be replaced with that of the creature sleeping with his head towards the south, and that happened to be an elephant. Let us remember that south is the direction presided over by Yama (the god of death).

There is one more legend associated with the elephant-head of Ganesa. When Ganesa was born, all the gods came to congratulate Siva and Parvati and to see and bless the child. Sani (Saturn) had also come, but he would not look at the child, as his wife had cursed that whoever he gazed upon would be destroyed. But Parvati gave him permission to look at her son. It is said that a mere side-glance of Sani, led to severance of Ganesa’s head from his body.

What is the meaning of the creation of the child out of sweat and dust? In the evolution of mankind at a certain point in time, millions of years ago, when man was not as he is now, reproduction was not through the union of the sexes. There were sweat-born and egg-born races. The Second and early Third Race was formed from drops of “sweat,” which after many a transformation, grew into human bodies. It is not difficult to imagine or believe this if we accept and understand the growth of the foetus from an imperceptible germ, which foetus develops into a child, and then into a strong, heavy man, says H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 177)

In *Varaha Purana*, Ganesa is said to have been produced by Siva alone. When Devas and Sages approached Siva to create a being that would obstruct any obstacles to the good actions they were doing, Siva produced from the splendour of his countenance a youth, shedding radiance all around him, and endowed with qualities of Siva. He was another *Rudra*, a *Kumara*. This may perhaps refer to the progeny produced by Kriyasakti, in an

immaculate way, in the early part of the Third Race, many millions of years ago, called “Sons of Will and Yoga.” (*S.D.*, I, 207)

Ganesa is called “*Ekadanta*,” having one tusk. Ganesa is believed to be the scribe, who wrote *Mahabharata*, with his broken tusk, dictated by sage Vyasa. We are also told that Ganesa agreed to be a scribe but with a condition that Vyasa should dictate continuously without a pause, while Vyasa put the counter condition that Ganesa must understand every word and its implications before writing it down. In between, Vyasa would purposely dictate some complex verses so that Ganesa would have to pause and ponder, and meanwhile Vyasa composed some more verses. This shows that *Mahabharata* must be pondered over and read a passage at a time. The broken tusk symbolizes great sacrifices that the divine beings make for helping mankind. For instance, it is said that *Dorje* or *Vajra* is the weapon made from the bones of rishi Dadhich, which is supposed to protect one from evil influences.

In his book, *The Symbolism of Hindu Gods and Rituals*, explaining the symbology of various parts of Ganesa’s body and the elephant head, A. Parthasarathy observes that the trunk represents the faculty of discrimination arising from wisdom. The trunk of an elephant has the unique capacity of performing both gross and subtle activities. An elephant can use his trunk to uproot a tree, and also to pick up a coin or a needle from the ground. So also one must aspire to reach discrimination that can penetrate the realms of material as well as spiritual worlds. One of the meanings of the broken tusk of Ganesa is that a man of perfection, rooted in the supreme wisdom, is not swayed by the pairs of opposites, like joy and sorrow, honour and dishonour, etc. Ganesa’s huge belly signifies that a person desiring wisdom must be able to digest every experience, extracting the necessary lessons. Ganesa’s vehicle is rat, which represents the lower, passionate nature. To reach wisdom one needs to subdue the animal nature. Rat is a tiny but greediest of all the animals. It is so greedy that it steals more than it can eat; hoards and puts it in burrows and then forgets about it, going in search of food again. With its

sharp teeth it can cause widespread destruction. Similarly, one little desire entering man's mind can destroy all his material and spiritual wealth, laboriously gathered over a long period.

Ganesa is *Buddhidata*—god of learning or wisdom. Buddhi is the highest spiritual intellection and in it resides the faculty of intuition. It is the sum of all experiences garnered by the soul in various kingdoms—mineral, vegetable, animal and human. It is the source of all *saktis*, magical and yogic powers. When Buddhi is activated, *Kundalini sakti* is aroused. Ganesa's wives are Riddhi and Siddhi, *i.e.*, prosperity and power—showing that power and prosperity are inseparable from spiritual knowledge or wisdom. Says Krishna in *Shrimad Bhagavat*: “He who is engaged in the performance of Yoga, who has subdued his senses and who has concentrated his mind in me (Krishna) such Yogis all the Siddhis stand ready to serve.” An occultist is a person with wisdom and powers, so that he can do the good he desires, apparently without lifting of a finger. Ganesa is the Hindu equivalent of Egyptian deities—Thoth-Hermes, Anubis and Hermanubis, which the *Glossary* defines as:

Hermanubis: The fact that, esoterically, Adam and Eve while representing the early third Root Race—those who being still mindless, imitated the animals and degraded themselves with the latter—stand also as the dual symbol of sexes. Hence Anubis, the Egyptian god of generation, is represented with the head of an animal, a dog or a jackal.

Hermes Trismegistus: Hermes Trismegistus is the name of Thoth or Hermes in his human aspect....As Hermes-Thoth-Aah, he is Thoth, the moon, *i.e.*, his symbol is the bright side of the moon, supposed to contain the essence of creative Wisdom....The same idea underlies the form of the Hindu God of Wisdom, the elephant-headed Ganesa.

Thoth [Hermes]: He is the god of wisdom. He is the recorder and the judge. His ibis-head, the pen and tablet of the celestial scribe, who records the thoughts, words and deeds of men,

and weighs them in the balance, liken him to the type of esoteric *Lipikas*. He is the lunar god of the first dynasties, the master of cynocephalus—the dog-headed ape who stood in Egypt as a living symbol and remembrance of the Third Root-Race....Thoth carries the serpent-rod, emblem of wisdom....He is the Greek Hermes....Hermes was the serpent itself in a mystical sense. But he is the foe of the bad serpent, for the ibis devoured the snakes of Egypt.

Ganesa, as well as the Egyptian equivalent deities, have animal head and body of man, which refers to that point in evolution when man was so only in form but no better than an animal. It may be the reminder that Hermaphrodite man separated into sexes and, devoid of mind, imitated animals and uniting with huge she-animals (unnatural union), gave rise to Anthropoid Apes. Eighteen million years ago, *Kumaras*, the sons of Siva, lighted up the mind of man, that was lying latent like an unlit candle. Thus, Ganesa is also a *Kumara*. After the lighting up of *Manas*, the infant humanity was not left to itself to exercise its newly acquired power of thought, but was guided by spiritual beings. There were Divine Instructors who taught humanity great spiritual ideas. Are these ideas lost? In one sense as described in the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, the mighty art was lost from the external world. But there is also an inner line of transmission, where the wisdom is transmitted from guru to his disciples, and so on. This inner transmission is forever going on. Hence, when the outer transmission is garbled, a being from the inner line incarnates and restarts the chain. Thus, God-like beings like Ganesa continue to have the custody of spiritual knowledge. To worship Ganesa is to ask him to guide us to see things clearly. As St. Paul says: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

When *Buddhi* is activated the person becomes a walker of the sky, *i.e.*, he is able to overcome physical obstacles, get powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience, and can read the thoughts passing

through the mind of an ant. Activation of *Buddhi* happens when *Manas* conjoins with *Buddhi* and therefore *The Voice of the Silence* says, “Seek, O Beginner, to blend thy Mind and Soul.” H.P.B. says that acquirement of divine wisdom requires sacrifice and devotion of a man’s whole life. In a sense, it involves pushing the mind out of the orbit of animal life and tearing one’s self away from ordinary ways and ordinary life that one was used to living.

There is the allegory of Tara, Soma and Brihaspati (Jupiter), wherein Brihaspati represents *dead-letter* and ritualistic or ceremonial worship. Tara, his wife, symbolizes a person, who although wedded to dogmatic worship longs for true wisdom. She is *carried away* by Soma—who initiates her into mysteries, *Gupta Vidya* or esoteric Wisdom. This is represented by saying that union of Tara and Soma was Buddha—(Greek Hermes or Mercury), *i.e.*, God of Wisdom or Ganesa. Hence the incarnated consciousness of the aspiring soul unites with *Buddhi* giving rise to wisdom.

The real property of the *true* Soma was (and *is*) to make a new *man* of the Initiate, after he is *reborn*, namely once that he begins to live in his *astral* body; for, his spiritual nature overcoming the physical, he would soon snap it off and part even from that etherealized form....The partaker of Soma finds himself both linked to his external body and yet away from it in his spiritual form. The latter, freed from the former, soars for the time being in his ethereal higher regions, becoming virtually “as one of the gods,” and yet preserving in his physical brain the memory of what he sees and learns. Plainly speaking, *Soma* is the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge forbidden by the Elohim to Adam and Eve. (*S.D.*, II, 499 and fn.)

KEEP away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.

—MARK TWAIN

THE ETERNAL AND UNCHANGING

ALL around are change and contrast, not only of form but also of consciousness. The world is never still. Our minds are never still. Even death is not still. A ceaseless coming and going—of ideas, of emotions, of the cells of our bodies. Change is separating the components of the personality itself. The emotions which were so vivid, so engrossing only the other year, fade out even in life as after death do the lower, more selfish desires and passions, greeds and envies, prides and ambitions, in their own plane of *Kamaloka*—till only the germs of them are left. Even our highest hopes and aspirations, which accompany the Soul to its own state after the death of the body, even they, the truest loves, the fondest dreams, the grandest ideals, change and pass continually before—before what?

There is That in us which sees it all, which seeing is not seen, which acting is not the actor and loving is not the lover. They come and go in It. It is the sustainer of them all. Without It they could not exist. It is ancient, constant and eternal. If it were not in us how could we conceive of It? It is beyond finite conception, “of another nature than the visible.” But that “other nature” is the very Root of our own being. Why do we not conceive of Eternity within? Because we live in the evanescent flowery states that bloom and fade, season after season. In the universe pervaded by duality, we live in the contrasts—joy and woe, song and sorrow, hope and despair, fear and security, love and hate. And all the time, for ever and for ever, under these changing states is the Root which sustains them all. That Root is the Real.

But if we have not recognized ourselves as That, if, through all our lives, thoughts and feelings have been absorbed in the passing pageant—and it is a marvellous procession full of colour and sound—if we have forgotten, in the midst of its enchantment, that “other nature” from which we came, what will the last hour be like? If the Soul has been caught up in the illusion of life, will it not

equally be captured by the illusion of death? For only he, who in life strives with constant practice to identify himself with his own immortal nature, can realize it fully at the moment of death.

Let us pause and picture this for a moment. I am dying. I am not uninstructed, for the Great Teachers have not left us ignorant of our own nature. I know I shall not die when my body does. I know, too, I shall go on living in whatever heaven I have set my heart on during life; that it will be an expansion of my life's ideation; and that even this will pass, and I shall reincarnate again until I have achieved immortality. I recognize that I have lived and died many times before, passing unconsciously from one state to the other, climbing a stair higher with each life, a little wiser, a little braver, a little more full of loving kindness. But now I am just Every soul, at a certain stage of a long pilgrimage. And thus have I heard: "Whoso in consequence of constant meditation on any particular form thinketh upon it when quitting his mortal shape, even to that doth he go." Now therefore what shall I think of? What is dearest? What of all the life experience will the immortal part of me wish to keep and build into itself forever? Can I choose, or must I see what I *have* chosen all through life, thrown on the screen of my consciousness from behind my eyes?

A strange wonder is happening. I am looking into the faces of the years. They come crowding before me with manifold meanings, years of struggle and achievement, of success and failure, years pregnant with promise, hopeless with disillusionment, bright with desire, heart-sick, heaven-happy, so many kinds of years, the whole gamut of a life's experience. What of it all will last? What will the winnowing be? This little "I" that is called now Every soul, how should it know what its divine Ego would wish to keep eternally?

How small, how pitiful, like a child's toys when he is grown, seem all those old hopes and interests and strivings! Shabby even. What do they mean now? For now we are on the Narrow Way trodden by the pilgrim-feet of all mankind—and know ourselves to be one of a host, travelling. And on that road of life each seeks the shrine of his heart's aspiration—not a part of it, but the whole, all;

and seeking, finds. Sooner or later, each finds what he seeks; and finding, offers all that he is, all that he has, though it be only his pilgrim's staff; or though it be a crown and sceptre; or though it be "a leaf, a flower, or fruit, or water" so only it be offered unto the Highest, the Dearest, the Eternal. "For know that the Eternal knows no change."

Where now are our separate desires, O Every soul? The lives that come and go and come again; the loves, the purposes that sway them, that wreck and reconstruct them—how should any of these be, unless they were rooted in that which "knows no change." When we ally ourselves with that, we too shall know no change. And that is the goal of Every soul's endeavour; to identify himself with That while still in a body. "Assimilation with the Supreme Spirit is on both sides of death." Life and death are states of consciousness. Immortality is also a state of consciousness. We have to learn to live, while dying; and in the paradox of spiritual experience, to die while living.

There are so many deaths—only one Immortality.

The great moment of enlightenment and union with his own divine nature comes to Every soul. The God who has incarnated to sacrifice himself for the creature, makes himself known just for a time at the hour of death. And the creature sees and knows. It is the "unknown God" of whom St. Paul said: "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." To That one sacrifices in the eternal moment when once one sees, to nothing less—and finds it the real part of one's own self. "Him declare I unto thee." For He and thee are one and the same, not incarnate but brooding over the incarnation which is its instrument.

This is to be achieved, not in time, but in eternity. When is that? Where is the eternal hour? There is only one. It is whichever one is Now.

THE ART OF HEALING

II

IT is not denied that cures are brought about even by “mental healing” techniques in specific cases where the disease had its roots in the person’s strong and fearsome imagination. In cases where trouble arises because of wrong imagination, a cure may be effected by practices, which tend to shift the focus of concentration away from negative imagination. Some nervous derangements may thus be cured. Those that arise from a wrong attitude of mind will disappear when we are contented and self-centred. With the obstructing imagination removed from its path, body’s own healing mechanism swings into action and restores the harmony and wholesome state. But in all other cases, such practices simply have the effect of forcing back the seeds of disease to their hiding place, inhibiting their development, and preventing their exhaustion. Things take an ugly turn when the strain caused to physical and psychological structures is too much. They then react and return the vibrations downward with such great force that it sometimes leads to insanity or manifestation of disease with violent characteristics. With such dangers and promise of only a postponement of disease to some future day, it is best to look for other means to find relief or cure of one’s disease.

Power of sound and music over certain diseases, particularly nervous diseases, was well known to philosophers and to our ancients. The *Old Testament* mentions David playing the harp to cast out the devil from Saul. Kircher Athanasius, Jesuit priest and scholar, studied the effect of music, particularly of the harmonica, on diseases and recommended its use. Asclepiades used the trumpet to cure sciatica. Democritus affirmed that many diseases could be cured by the melodious sounds of a flute. The “doctrine of affects” (affection) affirms that music is capable of arousing a variety of specific emotions within the listener. H.P.B. explains how cures are brought about by music:

The sound has an attractive property; it draws out disease, which streams out to encounter the musical wave, and the two, blending together, disappear in space. (*Isis*, I, 215)

Cures have also been brought about by Mesmerism. Every living being possesses Animal Magnetism. Animal magnetism is a *fluid*, an emanation. Some people can emit it for curative purposes through their eyes and the tips of their fingers, while the rest, men, animals and even inanimate objects, emanate it either as an *aura*, or a varying light, and that whether consciously or not. When acted upon by contact with a patient or by the will of a human operator, it is called “Mesmerism.” H.P.B. clearly explains how the healing is achieved by mesmerism. Thus:

A person in health is charged with positive vitality—*prana*, Od, Aura, electro-magnetism, or whatever else you prefer to call it: one in ill-health is negatively charged: the positive vitality, or health element, may be discharged by an effort of the healer’s will into the receptive nervous system of the patient: they touch each other, the fluid passes, equilibrium is restored in the sick man’s system, the *miracle* of healing is wrought, and the lame walk, the blind see, deaf hear, dumb speak, and humours of long standing vanish in a moment! Now, if besides health, power of will, knowledge of science, and benevolent compassion on the healer’s part, there be also faith, passivity, and the *requisite attractive polarity*, on that of the patient, the effect is the more rapid and amazing. Or, if faith be lacking and still there be the necessary polaric receptivity, the cure is still possible. (*The Theosophist*, April 1883)

In mesmerism, the healer actually loses his vitality in effecting such cures and there is danger involved both for the curer and the cured. H.P.B. cautions eager men and women who want to cure and be cured, thus:

Those who may, after reading our remarks, feel a call to heal the sick, should bear in mind the fact that all the curative

magnetism that is forced by their will into the bodies of their patients, *comes out of their own systems*. What they have, they can give; no more. And as the maintenance of one's own health is a prime duty, they should never attempt healing unless they have a surplus of vitality to spare, over and above what may be needed to carry themselves through their round of duties and keep their systems well up to tone. Otherwise they would soon break down and become themselves invalids. (*The Theosophist*, April 1883)

In all these instances, the cure is radical and real, and without secondary ill-effects. But, when one who is himself physically diseased, attempts healing, he not only fails of that, but often imparts his illness to his patient, and robs him of what strength he may have....If a diseased person—medium or not—attempts to heal, his force may be sufficiently robust to displace the disease, to disturb it in the present place, and cause it to shift to another, where shortly it will appear; the patient, meanwhile, thinking himself cured.

But, what if the healer be morally diseased? The consequences may be infinitely more mischievous; for it is easier to cure a bodily disease than cleanse a constitution infected with moral turpitude....The healer, in such a case, conveys to his patient—who is now his victim—the moral poison that infects his own mind and heart. His magnetic touch is defilement; his glance, profanation. Against this insidious taint, there is no protection for the passively-receptive subject. The healer holds him under his power, spell-bound and powerless, as the serpent holds a poor, weak bird. The evil that one such “healing medium” can effect is incalculably great; and such healers there are by the hundred. (*Isis*, I, 217)

There are a number of cases of “faith-cure” to be found in the records of human history. Faith in the doctor, faith in the healer, faith in a holy place or an object, canalizes the patient's will and brings about remarkable cures. Once Sir Humphry Davy cured a

paralytic patient by merely placing a thermometer under the patient's tongue, day after day, which the ignorant patient considered to be the treatment of his disease. Placebo pills have successfully removed disease without any actual medication. H.P.B. beautifully sums up this particular aspect of healing, thus:

Healing, to deserve the name, requires either faith in the patient, or robust health united with a strong will, in the operator. *With expectancy supplemented by faith, one can cure himself of almost any morbid condition*. The tomb of a saint; a holy relic; a talisman; a bit of paper or a garment that has been handled by the supposed healer; a nostrum; a penance, or a ceremonial; the laying on of hands, or a few words impressively pronounced—either will do. It is a question of temperament, imagination, self-cure. In thousands of instances, the doctor, the priest, or the relic has had credit for healings that were solely and simply due to the patient's unconscious will. The woman with the bloody issue who pressed through the throng to touch the robe of Jesus, was told that her “faith” had made her whole....The influence of mind over the body is so powerful that it has effected miracles at all ages. (*Isis*, I, 216)

While we have managed to control or almost eradicate many of the grave diseases such as tuberculosis, cholera, smallpox, etc., new and more menacing ones, such as cancer and AIDs, have sprung up, the cures for which eludes us. The responsibility for these diseases lies very much with present-day humanity. Science is doing its best to dislodge the germs of disease and foulness of the blood, but unless there is a change in human nature, unless man truly becomes a child of Mother Nature—innocent, trusting and pure—his quest will not end. Mr. Judge offers us the panacea for all ills in a simple but profound manner:

The world could get along with what disease there is, if it only turned attention to high ethics and altruistic endeavour. For after a few centuries of right living the

nations would have purged themselves and built up a right moral building well founded on the rocks of true philosophy, charity, and love. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 22*)

(*Concluded*)

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MEMORY—THE SPHINX OF SCIENCE

I

AN elderly gentleman in his eighties was hurrying to keep an appointment with his hospitalized wife, who was suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. She no longer knew who he was and had not recognized him in five years. When asked why he visited her every morning, even though she did not recognize him, his answer was, “*She does not know me, but I still know who she is*” (*East and West Series*, January 2006). Such is the tragedy of those suffering from Alzheimer’s disease—acute form of memory loss. Dementia is a brain disorder that seriously affects a person’s ability to carry out daily activities. The most common form of dementia among older people is Alzheimer’s disease. Alzheimer’s disease is a progressive brain disorder that gradually destroys a person’s memory and ability to learn, reason, make judgments, communicate and carry out daily activities. Among other things, scientists have also found that nerve cells die in areas of the brain that are vital to memory and other mental abilities, and connections between nerve cells are disrupted. However, the cause and cure of this disease still eludes scientists.

But what is memory and loss of memory? H.P.B. aptly describes memory as the despair of the materialist, the enigma of the psychologist and the sphinx of science. Scientists and psychologists are unable to understand the nature of memory because of their inability to understand the nature of mind and potentialities of Higher Mind. Brain is the instrument used by mind. There are three types of memory—*Remembrance*, *Recollection* and *Reminiscence*, and in order to understand soul-memory or reminiscence one must accept the existence of Higher Mind.

Broadly speaking, “Memory is an innate power in thinking beings, and even in animals, of reproducing past impressions by an association of ideas principally suggested by objective things or by some action on our external sensory organs.” Remembrance and

recollection are dependent on more or less normal and healthy functioning of our *physical* brain. When we are able to remember without any external aid, it is *remembrance*. It is spontaneous remembering of the past impressions or ideas, with little or no effort. But when we have to put pressure on our mental muscle, *i.e.*, by an effort of the will, *or* when we recall because something from the outside suggests itself to us, it is called *recollection*. For instance, the smell of a certain perfume may remind us of a friend, or we may be reminded of our trip to Switzerland on seeing a picture of snowy mountains, etc. In *recollection*, we can *collect back* from one point all the other points connected with it. *Reminiscence* is soul-memory; it is the direct perception of what was, and is not dependent upon brain—the brain merely serves as a sort of filter or translator of impressions.

A slightly different form of *recollection* is mentioned in *Transactions*. During sleep, the Ego is acting on its own plane and something of what happened on that plane is impressed on the brain. However, because of some obstacle, this memory is not brought into waking consciousness, even though it is registered in the appropriate nerve centre or cell of the brain. It “hangs fire,” till some event or sensation gives the needed impulse. Then the brain slips it off into the conscious memory of the waking man. This is possible because incessantly, day and night, there is a sort of conscious telegraphic communication going on between the physical brain and the inner man.

What is the seat of memory? Where does the record of happenings in past and present life reside? What is the exact process by which memory—in its various aspects—such as remembrance, recollection and reminiscence functions in man? These are some of the eternally puzzling questions. Brain is not the seat of memory. Astral Light is the tablet or storehouse of the unseen universe, where every fleeting impression, feeling, thought and action, as every pulsation of the visible cosmos, is recorded. Astral Light is the tablet of memory of the animal man, while *Akasa* is the tablet of memory of the spiritual

Ego. Memory, says H.P.B., is that power which every human being unconsciously exercises, to look with inner sight into the astral light and there see the images of past sensations and impressions. In other words, memory is unconscious looking into and reading the impressions in the astral light. Each plane has its own tablet of memory. On all planes “memory” must be the power of reproducing past experiences.

The brain cells are *receivers* and *conveyors* of memory, but not their preservers or *retainers*. When it is said that one has lost his memory, or that it is weakened, it is partly because the memory cells have become enfeebled. H.P.B. gives an analogy. Through the window glass we are able to see the objects outside, but if the windowpane is cracked, we shall see only distorted images, and if it is replaced with cardboard, we are unable to see anything. However, the objects outside the window have not disappeared and can be seen once the windowpane is repaired. So, too, the Universal Memory (Astral Light) preserves every impression.

Besides the enfeebling or degeneration of the brain cells, poor memory may have something to do with careful observation and *notation*. Mr. Crosbie defines memory as the faculty of perceiving the registration. We have many careless habits of letting things impress us without careful notation. For instance, people often look at their watch and put it back in the pocket. If you ask, “What time is it?” they have to look again, because first time when they looked at the watch, they saw what time it *was not*, and hence the observation did not result in any clear and definite *notation*. Probably, this is the reason why in olden days importance was given to “repetition” in the learning process, so as to create clear and definite impression. Impressions that are deeply imprinted, because of the special attention given to them, when they are formed, can be easily recollected.

Our body is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of “lives.” Every atom has a life and memory of its own. Memory in the “lives” when *innate* is called instinct. Instinct functions through readymade

nerve connections, which ensure that such-and-such a response will occur in a certain situation. In a habit these nerve connections are made through exercise, when “lives” in the body are repeatedly given certain kind of impressions, day after day. Similarly, we can train the “lives” of the body to perform certain tasks—for instance, typing, playing musical instruments, etc. The “lives” in the fingertips retain the memory, are habituated, so that after several attempts we are able to perform the task effortlessly.

Mr. Judge explains that instinct is *recollection*, divisible into physical and mental memory. In the case of a person who might have burnt himself in a particular life, his physical and mental memory is so impressed by that experience that in the next life he will instinctively stay away from fire; and we call this instinctive fear of fire. In the same way the *Kama* principle can be given such strong impressions that in coming lives we have instinctive likes and dislikes.

Mr. Crosbie says that memory of walking and talking is with us, though we may not remember how and when we learned to walk and talk. It is memory that connects us with body, through all its changes. Without the memory, we would simply live from one impression to the other without any sense of self-identity.

We are also told that every organ and cell in the body is a *seat* of memory. Thus:

The whole human body is, as said, a vast sounding board, in which each cell bears a long record of impressions connected with its parent organ, and each cell has a memory and a consciousness of its kind, or call it instinct if you will. These impressions are according to the nature of the organ, physical, psychic, or mental, as they relate to this or another plane. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, pp. 77-78)

Memory of our daily-life activities and purely personal feelings and actions, such as, eating, drinking, enjoying sensual pleasures, acts of envy, jealousy, hatred, etc., have their seat in the personal Ego or lower mind and have nothing to do with the Higher Mind.

So also, on the physical plane, the memory of such purely personal activities has nothing to do with brain or heart, but is related to certain *Kamic* or passional organs, such as, spleen, liver, stomach etc., so that the memory of personal activities is first awakened in these organs. For instance, a hungry stomach evokes the vision of a past banquet, *i.e.*, the memory of the stomach evokes the images from the astral light even before the personal self. On the other hand higher forms of mental experiences correlate with cerebral and cardiac centres, *i.e.*, brain and heart. “Occultism teaches that the liver and spleen-cells are the most subservient to the action of our ‘personal’ mind, the heart being the organ *par excellence* through which the Higher Ego acts—through the Lower Self.”

Researchers are wondering whether recovered or repressed memories are real. It happens many a time that people make up “false memories” which are so powerful that they come to be regarded as real. These false memories are the result of vivid imagining capacities. For instance, many times people claim to have been abused as children, abducted by aliens, etc. All such claims are not always genuine, nor are they always the result of repression of disturbing emotional events. Often people have the uncanny feeling of having experienced something before. It is termed *déjà vu* (French for “already seen”). Various possibilities exist. During sleep, the astral body (soul) becomes free and travels round visible and invisible worlds. Pictures and images seen during astral travel are impressed on the brain, but we remember nothing upon waking up. However, a person who knows that he has never visited in body, nor seen the landscape and person that he recognizes, may well assert that still he has seen and knows them, for the acquaintance was formed while travelling in “spirit.” This is because the impressions of such scenes are lying latent, forming part of the person’s inner memory, which can be awakened at any moment. This inner memory is awakened when a current is established between the “micrographs” of the cerebral ganglia and the photo-scenographic galleries of the astral light. (*Isis*, I, 180)

H.P.B. affirms that suggestions made by an adult during the childhood period or by a hypnotizer do not fade away but leave an impression that surfaces later. Thus:

Crying children frightened into silence by the *suggestion* of a monster, a devil standing in the corner, by a foolish nurse, have been known to become insane twenty or thirty years later on the same subject. There are mysterious, secret drawers, dark nooks and hiding places in the labyrinth of our memory, still unknown to physiologists, and which open only once, rarely twice, in a man's lifetime, and that only under very abnormal and peculiar conditions. (*Lucifer*, June 1890)

Mr. Judge suggests—in another context—that we carry pictures and images in our aura—which include pre-natal impressions—which are not always developed into memory, but await appropriate conditions. Thus, when a child is born it carries with it pictures and impressions derived from the mother. It would be very difficult to know at what point in time the image was projected before one's mind, as thousands of impressions are made every year. That they are not *developed into memory* does not prove their non-existence. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 171)

(*To be concluded*)

If only the people who worry about their liabilities would think about the riches they do possess, they would stop worrying. Would you sell both your eyes for a million dollars...or your two legs...or your hands...or your hearing? Add up what you do have, and you'll find that you won't sell them for all the gold in the world. The best things in life are yours, if you can appreciate yourself.

—DALE CARNEGIE

MAN—THE THINKER

Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me.

—*Bhagavad-Gita*, ix, 27

AT the end of each *Pralaya* (period of non-manifestation) the Universe awakes to a new day. With that dawn, there emerge entities that are collectively the repositories and custodians of the eternal thought that ever resides within the eternal mind. The plan of evolution for the new period of manifestation gets its first impulse forward from the moment the periodic consciousness wells up within the Absolute.

Every form on earth as indeed every speck and atom in space has in its various processes of involution and evolution only one objective—man. It is man who is conceived of as the highest ultimate form and as the culmination of divine incarnations on earth. For us who have come to man's estate, the question naturally arises whether we, as we are, represent the crown and apex of all evolution. To any but the supreme egotist, the answer would be an emphatic no. Yet, along the course of even recent eras, we come across such names as Buddha and Jesus, Plato and Patanjali, Confucius and Zoroaster, not to mention Krishna and the ancient Rishis. What was it in them that raised them above the common herd and made of them figures of reverence for millions even after the lapse of centuries? It was, to put it roughly, the power of thought, which after being freed from desire was grafted upon the tree of life eternal.

To understand man as a thinker and to visualize the powers that he now has and those others that he can with assiduity cultivate, we have to understand him as an entity in whom three great evolutionary streams mix and mingle. First, there is in him the pure deific essence represented by Atma focused in its carrier Buddhi. This essence can make of a man a god provided a vehicle of pure sublimated

matter with its corresponding consciousness is made ready for it to enter and work through. But this deific essence is too near the plane of homogeneity to permit any relationship with conditioned and relative finiteness. It must therefore remain unconscious on our plane where heterogeneity prevails and is even worshipped. At the other extremity, there is the physical body which represents materiality and gross objectivity. Yet, it is from the grossness and materiality of the human form that is to be raised a tabernacle fit for the deific essence to enter and work through. The lotus has its roots in mire, yet transcending that circumstance it grows to rise above its lowly soil to the free air where it will blossom forth at the first kiss of the dawning light.

It is, however to be carefully noted that the matter of our plane can of itself have no aspiration towards divinity. It does not have that consciousness which through any advancement can reach to that exalted state. It is an instrument which can be fashioned to serve a monster or which can be made to handle with precision and ease the task to which the divine can set it. The gulf between the divine essence and the brute physical body had to be bridged. Between the sentient life of the irrational animal and the Divine Monad was fused the principle, or the intelligence, of the Elohim. In the course of their own evolution, these Elohim descend relatively into matter on their own plane of consciousness, and in the progress of time they blend the two potencies—spirit and matter—thus producing the man of mind complete. There is thus in man the Deific Essence crystallized in the Atma-Buddhic Monad; the indwelling and linking principle—the Manasa-Dhyanis or the Solar Devas (the givers of intelligence and consciousness); and lastly, the physical vehicle.

Man on earth is a god potentially; on the other hand he can be a devil incarnate; and all this depends on whether he gravitates to the spiritual or to the material pole of his being. Manas—the mind—which is the middle principle of the triple evolutionary scheme—has in it the quasi-perpetual motion of thought. It cannot and does not stop thinking. It can by the power of its thought gravitate towards

the divine Monad or it can form alliance with the passional aspects of the lower animal in him. Whether asleep or unconscious on this plane, the manasic being goes on thinking. It builds pictures and images. It ideates and it broods; and that ideation and that brooding literally create their own progeny in the invisible realms. This progeny of man, made of a coalition of his thoughts with nature's finer forces, lives and acts on its own plane with an intensity equal to that of the thought that propelled it into existence.

Man, as it were, stands between two fires and is forced to choose perpetually between the voice of the god within him and that of the animalistic desires that rage in the lower part of himself. The choosing of the better instead of the pleasanter is difficult because in the average man the brain is held captive by the animal in him and constantly swamps his discrimination with memories of forbidden deeds. For this unhappy state, he can blame neither man nor nature. The chains that bind him to his sordid existence are of his own making. When at last he begins to understand that these chains fetter him to the ignoble, he tries to shake them off and goes about doing so as though they were inert things. They are not. They have a life—he gave it. They have a force—he lent it. They recognize and cling to their sire and creator—himself. The more they are resisted and not conquered, the more they gain in strength and power for putting up obstacles and resistance in the future. This evil progeny is bound to the man by the electro-magnetic affinities that thoughts generate. They can be made harmless only by him who has assimilated to himself the powers of the Soul and has learnt to live in the eternal. Meanwhile, in the struggle for supremacy, the neophyte can expect no help from the divine. The nature of his inner god is absolute harmony, which getting thrown into confusion by an atmosphere of discord, suffering and sin, can render no assistance to the struggling Soul.

For the man who aspires to draw nearer to his inner god, the first important subject of study is the purpose for which the threefold evolution is joined and focused in him. One of these is that the man

is expected to use the force of divine thought upon matter so that the aroma that arises from such contact can be so alchemized as to be made acceptable to the divine Monad. The other purpose is so to employ thought as to raise the whole mass of matter being used in the body to a state where no taint of desire can reach it or stain its shining purity. In such a body, the principle of Kama would be transmuted to its original condition of divine impersonal love; and as this occurs, the ray of Manas, purified of all earthly dross—rejoins its source and parent, the Manasa-Dhyani. Unless this twofold ideal is constantly used to check the walk in life of the personal man, no great enlightenment can come.

The effort of the student is now to be tuned to a higher pitch. He has to learn to discriminate between the eternal and the non-eternal and consciously to force his thoughts to focus themselves on the eternal values that are to be sought for and extracted from daily living. It is futile to long for the eternal when one's desires and longings are still rooted in the personal, the evanescent and the perishable. Wherever any of these manifest, there the divine flowers have no scope to grow. The soil on which the mortal aspects thrive is stony ground unfit for the sowing of seeds within which lurk the possibilities of divinity. Each act and thought of man has its hidden vitalizing aspect which makes of it an immortal power or one which allies itself to the hosts that have affinities to the mortal aspects of things. Charity, patience, endurance, continence and right behaviour are all worthy to be cultivated. Yet, they will yield no fragrance unless they are motivated by an impersonal and altruistic compassion. Therefore the very first step to be taken by the would-be disciple is so to orient his actions as to suffuse his whole life with the motive of benefiting mankind. It requires great and purifying efforts on the part of the lower mind of man to force its intellectual powers to visualize actions and strivings that would later crystallize into acts of beneficence for all. Great results follow such imaginings.

Study also has now to be differently oriented, for study organizes and concentrates thought and gives it a meaning and power which

it otherwise would not possess. With a deepening of insight into the inner and hidden aspects of things, study can no longer be allowed to degenerate into a mere aid to explain aspects of things which pertain not to the spiritual and the divine in nature and in man. The Monad of man is quasi-omniscient on its own plane. To reach to its wisdom and knowledge, there has to be lighted in the lower man a fire that is kin to the fire of Wisdom from above. All thoughts have to be cleared of the dross of mortal desires before the man can expect to make his brain porous to the recollections of the immortal aspects of his soul.

A study of Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis brings together into one common fold the three main aspects of knowledge, namely, Religion, Science and Philosophy. When the mind is placed on such universal principles as are set out in *The Secret Doctrine*, it frees itself from the chains that bind it to the mortal and passionate aspects of life. Passages which seem abstruse, explanations which themselves require deep understanding to unravel their true meaning, are there to give the mind an exercise in thinking. The anchoring of thought on the true requires the building up of inner resources, many of which have been depleted because of neglect. But even in such study, the failings of the lower self may present hindrances. For instance, if the findings of modern science (they all deal with the non-eternal) are used to assess spiritual values, then no light comes because it will be the non-eternal portion of the mind and brain that will be functioning. Such a practice tries to assess spirit by standards applicable to matter. It gives a wrong twist to thought, and a general debasement of stature in mind and morals may ensue. When the mind follows the paths of error, be it orthodoxy, fanaticism, casteism and all the other myopic trends of thought including communalism, the mind and thought get alienated from the universal aspects that pervade the Cosmos and make their alliance with the darker side of life. Thought centred in such misguided ways requires desperate measures to shake it loose from such engines of mischief.

To unaccustomed minds, the problem is: How to think

impersonally, how to act altruistically. When the welfare of humanity is thought of, the canvas widens upon the eternal. The individual man is no longer that important although he is a unit of the vast landscape. The weaning of men from paths of error; the keeping of oneself ready to minister to the soul-needs of anyone; the tending of the despondent and the weak of heart; the passing on of divine knowledge; the leading of one's neighbour on to the right path; the guiding of another gently towards his participation in the forming of a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood; living the right life; engaging in the right occupation—all these and many more are seeds for impersonal thought, ideation and action.

For the integrated man, work—even if it be through thought alone—becomes an act of service in the sense that he voluntarily becomes a servant in helping to pass on the beneficence generated by minds higher than his to people who are far removed mentally to be affected by the primal act of beneficence except through his help and effort. The student thus becomes a link in the golden chain that reaches from the planes of the divine down to where divinity is hazy or exists not at all. Such acts are those of the martyr and the missionary and are exalted for the reason that they serve man as an integral part of an impartite whole.

Says Light on the Path:

The disciple who...is strong enough to pass each barrier, will, when the divine message comes to his spirit, forget himself utterly in the new consciousness which falls on him. If this lofty contact can really arouse him, he becomes as one of the divine in his desire to give rather than to take, in his wish to help rather than be helped, in his resolution to feed the hungry rather than take manna from Heaven himself. His nature is transformed, and the selfishness which prompts men's actions in ordinary life suddenly deserts him.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: Often, it is easier to forgive others than one's own self. How does one get over self-blame?

Answer: The general human tendency is to hide one's faults and mistakes, or make allowances for them, and even justify them, when pointed out. Buddha says that one hides one's own faults like a cheat hiding the losing throw. Thus, we may say that it is the mark of a progressed individual, not only to own up one's mistake but to feel sincerely repentant for the same. It shows that one has an awakened conscience. These "barbs of guilt," "pangs of conscience," and "feelings of remorse," have a purifying effect on the individual, when experienced within healthy limits. But when carried to excess, they can lead to despair, which is considered to be one of the cardinal sins, as it tends to paralyse the soul. By being in a perpetual state of self-blame, we brood over the wrong, and give that evil thing a power—a pure waste of psychic energy. As Mr. Judge says, regret nothing, not even your worst mistakes. "It is not wise to be always analysing our faults and failures—to regret is waste of energy." He advises us not to dwell in regret over past follies, as regret is a thought and an energy which vivifies the seeds of past mistakes and makes them grow, finally resulting in action.

Buddha asks us to follow that wise man who *blames what is blameworthy*. Discussion with the elder and wiser person clears the ground and we are able to look at the situation more objectively. A Master of Wisdom says that each one of us has, within himself, the Supreme Court—prosecutor, defence, jury and judge—whose

sentence is the only one without appeal. In other words, we are cautioned not to go into self-blame mode, based on the opinion and judgment of the world or our own *lower nature*. Buddha's advice to every spiritual aspirant is, "Rouse your self by your Self, examine your self by your Self. Thus self-guarded and mindful, you will live happily." During self-examination, we must allow our divine nature to judge the gravity of the offence, taking into account the extenuating circumstances, if any. Often, we give exaggerated reaction, and on inquiring with the offended or the harmed, we find that the situation was not as bad as we thought or imagined it to be. But granted that we have committed a mistake or even irreparable harm, let us ask, was it intentional or unintentional? If *unintentional*, we may resolve to be more vigilant and careful in the future, and if *intentional*, we may *genuinely repent*. First, it means asking the other person for forgiveness and reversing the wrong, if possible; and above all, making a solemn resolve to mend our ways.

Deep down, if we are honest, we shall discover that it is our ego that is hurt. How could *I* make a mistake such as this? We must remember that nobody is infallible, and even an elephant can slip. In fact, the higher we are on the rungs of the spiritual ladder, the more vigilant and careful we should be, as the fall will be greater. "Let him who thinketh that he standeth, take heed lest he fall." The golden rule of spiritual life is to learn the lesson from the situation and then move on, extracting and retaining only the essence of the experience. We may have set up very high standards for ourselves and then we are not able to live up to them. Hence, if we lapse in the discipline, let us admit that we were mistaken and that we have not reached the high stage we thought we had reached. It is only at a very high stage called *Samadana*, that the student is rendered constitutionally incapable of doing wrong, observes Mr. Crosbie. Meanwhile, as Mr. Judge says, "Be patient even with yourself"; and we may add, "Be gentle even with yourself." In the *Metta Bhavana* (Loving Kindness) meditation practised by the Buddhists, the first step consists in directing thoughts of loving kindness towards

one's own self, before doing it for others. That means forgiving and accepting one's self as it is, because if we cannot love and accept ourselves, it is difficult to love others.

Ultimately, let us leave the working out of things to the Great Law of Karma, whose faultless balance weighs, justly and impartially, so that neither our tears nor repentance can move that Karmic balance by a hair's breadth. Here are a few comforting lines from Max Ehmann: "Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe.... And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should."

Question: Because someone (Mr. A) is tolerant, the other person (Mr. B) takes him for granted. How should the former handle the latter?

Answer: This is a question concerning inter-personal relationship. Mr. B takes for granted that Mr. A is a mild, kind or yielding person, and exploits him in many ways. Here is a situation that is often encountered between a senior and a junior, the boss and the subordinate, a husband and wife, parent and child, etc. Whatever the relationship, what is the practical and moral solution?

An ideal solution is given in an Indian legend about a saint who was returning from his habitual early morning bath in the "holy" river, Ganges, when a non-believer spat on him. Silently, the holy one returned to the river to wash himself again. The ritual of spitting and bathing continued for some time. At last, the non-believer suddenly became impatient and asked why the saint was not annoyed. "I have to thank you. You gave me an excuse to touch my Holy Mother (Ganges) often enough in a day. I believe, each time it purified me. Also, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to test my endurance." One can imagine the reaction of the tormentor of this strong but kind and humble soul! "Enduring patience is the highest *Tapas*," says Buddha. *Tapa* means burning, heat and austerity, and *tapasya* means spiritual discipline. He who is self-restrained becomes fit to restrain others.

We can look at this problem vis-à-vis modern psychology. According to the recent branch of psychiatry (Transactional Analysis of Dr. Eric Berne), a tolerant person may be so, out of slavish timidity or an inability to stand up to the exploitation. He may be a “dependent” personality. However, if a person has in him what is known as “productive orientation” (positive trait in a “mature” adult), the “tolerance-threshold” may be quite high, and he may be gracefully lenient, patient, calm and forgiving in all situations, guided by higher principles and a balanced temperament. To take others for granted also means being morally insensitive as to how one’s behaviour torments others. Mr. B may be so preoccupied with his own emotional needs as to be unaware of the effects produced on others. Primarily, therefore, we need to understand Mr. B’s psyche. Understanding and charity will intuitively guide proper response toward Mr. B.

Morally speaking, the question is not just about how one should conduct oneself under any irritating and stressful situation, but, about how our behaviour can help others to change, however gradually, leading to reformation. Quite a difficult task indeed, but given a compassionate intention, it is possible to manage difficult people with tact and patience, though we may not always succeed in this.

Sometimes, however, it is necessary to intervene courageously when a bully takes advantage of others, especially those who are weak, subordinate and helpless. Gandhiji’s approach to a bully is a restrained but courageous and non-violent “resistance” that means not to yield before unjust demands from others, and yet to be ready to take the consequences. It is “to resist without resistance,” for the sake of others. All such events come to us as the test of our character and stamina.

An elephant steadily moves on, while dogs bark after him, but occasionally he does turn around when his calmness is misconstrued as weakness! Without being violent we may make the intruder aware when he crosses the limit of decency.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Do human beings have an innate moral faculty? Are moral decisions—knowing right from wrong—based on instincts encoded in our brain by evolution, as claimed by Harvard evolutionary biologist and cognitive neuroscientist Marc Hauser? Hauser argues that millions of years of natural selection have moulded a “universal *moral* grammar” within our brains that enables us to make rapid decisions about ethical dilemmas—a set of moral principles that every human being is born with. This set of innate, universal, moral principles guides our moral choices, and yet each culture has some freedom (limited), to harm or help. Among other things, his argument is based on the theories of MIT linguist Noam Chomsky, who in the 1950s proposed that all humans are equipped with a “universal *linguistic* grammar,” a set of instinctive rules that underlie all languages, and which yet show a lot of variation.

What is the evidence that we draw upon unconscious principles while making moral choices? Hauser observes that there appears to be some kind of unconscious process driving moral judgments, so that every time we are confronted with a moral issue, we do not sit down to work it out. Even children understand and appreciate the difference between social convention and moral rule. For instance, if children are told that they should not raise their hand when they wish to ask questions because that is what they do in France, they may agree to abide by the rule. But, if you tell them that you can punch the child sitting next to you when you are angry, because that is what they do in France, they might say, “The French are weird.” It is difficult to explain how children can distinguish between moral and social zone.

Are there moral principles that hold true across all societies? Hauser suggests that certain amount of reciprocity and co-operation seems to be a part of human and animal psychology, but there does not seem to be a generic rule that says, “Don’t kill others,” as there is always an in-group, out-group distinction, writes Josie Glausiusz.

(*Discover*, May 2007)

We may define morality as the practice of ethics. Hence, it is likely that what appears as “moral” to one person or civilization may appear “immoral” to another person or civilization and we then have *conventional morality*. However, true or divine ethics are consistent and universal. Ethics are statements of Universal Law, and are based on metaphysical realities, the underlying “soul” of things and universal harmony. A person who practises the moral code of his time could only be a *good man*, but a person who practises what he *knows* to be moral through his own study and judgment, becomes a *spiritual man*, and is not likely to be led away by what others term ethical or moral.

Ethics is that Science of the Soul, which relates to the causative world of being—its field of operation is within the real man. The plan of what is to be, or manifestation, first arises in the Divine Mind, and is reflected upon the eternal substance. Ethical ideas are the reflection on the moral plane of that plan made manifest, and may be described as Archetypal Ideas. These Archetypal Ideas were burnt into the very soul of Infant Humanity. We are told that those Divine Instructors who endowed infant humanity with the light of mind, impressed on the imperishable centre of man’s consciousness, first notions of arts and sciences, architecture, agriculture and spiritual knowledge, and we may term these as “innate ideas,” which reside in *Buddhi-Manas*. The faculty of (spiritual) discrimination resides in *Buddhi*. But man has a free will. When the mind gravitates to passions and desires, man makes wrong or morally incorrect choice, but in conjunction with or under temporary influence of the divine nature, he makes morally correct choice. Mr. Crosbie defines true morality and explains what leads us morally astray, thus:

True morality does not depend upon words, phrases, or conventions, but upon a *universal* perception of all things, whereby everything is done for good, every thought and feeling expanded for the benefit of others rather than for one’s self....Man’s false conceptions of life are what prevent

him from knowing the truth, and it is evident that the first step towards true perception lies in throwing aside the prejudices and predilections he has lived by. (*Universal Theosophy*, pp.123-24)

Cases of disturbing injuries caused by wrong yoga practices are on the rise as there is a severe shortage of good teachers. Gurus are now being manufactured, or are manufacturing themselves, to meet the huge demand. Many of these self-styled teachers possess only superficial knowledge of yoga and as they carry no yogic certificates, it is difficult to ascertain if they are qualified to teach or not. Many learners suffer severe injuries because the teacher corrects the posture violently. There are several instances of students who have fainted after performing headstands. Some postures may also cause internal bleeding in those with ulcers. There have also been instances of people performing the “Kapalbhati” a breathing process, over a hundred times at a stretch, which may result in giddiness and even diarrhoea. “Half-baked yoga teachers today not only impart faulty techniques but also lack communications skills and sensitivity....It is truly beneficial only when customized for each individual....Yoga is not exactly an *ad hoc* cure as it is advertised by some. It is a way of life, like music and diet. Its influence is evident only in the long term,” writes Sharmila Ganesan. But it is not always the teachers that are at fault but also the tendency of the people who seek instant relief. “The most extreme cases of phoney yoga are, of course, imparted in developed countries. Dogs are taught yoga there, and there is a new genre called ‘nude yoga’ where everybody is encouraged to strip and merge their egos,” writes Ganesan. (*Sunday Times of India*, June 24, 2007)

A good deal has been said in Theosophical literature about the dangers of pursuing Yoga practices, such as regulating the breathing, assuming certain postures of the body, etc. The word “yoga” is

derived from the Sanskrit “*Yuj*,” meaning union. Yoga is supposed to bring about the union of Higher (Divine) and lower (personal) nature in man. The Yoga system is divided into two principal parts—Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. Hatha Yoga system deals mainly with the physiological part of man with a view to establish his health and train his will. Undertaken without adequate guidance, Hatha-Yogic practices involve serious physical and moral risks. Explaining the risks Mr. Judge writes:

It is well understood in the right circles in India, that the directions found in many of the *Upanishads* should never be practised, except under the following conditions: (a) a complete knowledge of all, and of the consequences, with a knowledge of correctives to be applied when changes take place; and (b) the possession of a thoroughly competent guide to point out errors, to restrain endeavour and to indicate danger, as well as to cure troubles that ensue. Yet in the face of all this, and of repeated warnings, there are those who will foolhardily begin the practices in complete ignorance. They do not even pursue the ethical regulations that accompany all the others, such as the doing away with all vices, bad habits, uncharitable thoughts and so on...It is well known that these postures, even when ignorantly used, bring on physiological changes in the body, with great nervous derangements. (*The Vahan*, January 1892)

Patanjali’s eightfold system of Yoga is “Raja Yoga” that is concerned with the control of the mind and lays more emphasis on practice of the virtues. *Yama* (Forbearance) and *Niyama*, (Religious observances), precede the remaining six steps in the Yoga system. Regarding *asanas* or “postures,” he says, “a posture assumed by a yogi must be steady and comfortable.” Patanjali makes only slight allusion to “postures,” (each of which is very difficult) and the “retention of the breath.” Raja Yoga is infinitely safer and more spiritual, while Hatha Yoga is not. In Hatha Yoga practice there is psychic development at the delay or expense of the spiritual

development, observes Mr. Judge.

What is empathy? “Empathy is a precious gift we can offer our fellow beings. When we learn to see through another’s eye, or feel through another’s mind, conflicts dissolve and love unfolds,” writes Megha Bajaj (*Life Positive*, July 2007). The origin of the word “empathy” dates back to the 1880s, when German psychologist Theodore Lipps coined the term *einfehlung*, which literally means “in-feeling.” Empathy is being in-tune with another so as to be able to help that person resolve his problem. Empathy is not pity, *i.e.*, feeling sorry for another’s pain, but being unable to even imagine oneself in that condition. Empathy is a more “involved” emotion, which includes steps of seeing, connecting, feeling and then acting. We can gradually transform pity into empathy. Thus:

We pity a blind person, for we don’t know what blindness is. However, when we rise higher, look at the other as an equal, can probably imagine ourselves in his condition, and feel a strong bond with him, then that pity converts itself into sympathy. When, however, we identify so totally with another that he suffers, and we feel the pain; he laughs, and joy suffuses our being; he is excited, and our heart leaps in exhilaration; then we are close to the condition that is called empathy.

Empathy is getting into another’s shoes. Hence, the first step towards learning to be empathetic is *not to wear our own shoes too tightly, i.e.*, letting go of one’s ego. We are so obsessed with our *own feelings* and *judgments* that we have no time to understand what *another* is going through. The second step is *to get the complete feel of being in another’s shoes*. It is not enough to step into another’s shoes and then immediately step out. The third step is *to remember to get our feet back in our own shoes*. In other words, we must feel another’s misery, understand its cause, and help him out, while

retaining our equanimity, else empathy will lead to two depressed people, instead of only one.

An empathizer must be a good listener and must be ready to love unconditionally. The foundation of empathy is the realization that “all is one,” that it is the soul that matters, and that all souls are reflections of One Consciousness, writes Bajaj.

Empathy is a *sine qua non* quality that every spiritual aspirant is required to develop, as it is rooted in the appreciation and realization of non-separateness. The heart and being of someone who desires to progress spiritually, must respond to every sigh and thought of *all that lives and breathes*. Empathy may be termed “imaginative sympathy,” and good literature helps us cultivate it. The more we have cultivated the feeling of oneness and the more impersonal and self-effacing we are, the easier it is for us to practise empathy. An empathizer must have detached concern, as only then he can have true insight into the problem, and ultimately, help the sufferer to help himself. *The Voice of the Silence* says, “Let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.” Empathy helps establish harmony by making it easier for us to appreciate another’s point of view.

Though it is easier to empathize with close friends and our near and dear ones, one of the conditions for learning practical occultism is empathy or a “spiritual bond” that one needs to forge with co-disciples. Thus:

The *upasaka* while studying must take care to be united as the fingers on one hand. Thou shalt impress upon their minds that whatever hurts one should hurt the others, and if the rejoicing of one finds no echo in the breasts of the others, then the required conditions are absent, and it is useless to proceed. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

THE most unhappy of all men is he who believes himself to be so.

—DAVID HUME

that in a previous life, in a past incarnation, he could have sown the cause of his present blindness. Jesus says, “the works of god should be made manifest in him.” It is by the power of the god within us that we can overcome any defect or weakness. The Law, which is Divine Justice, produced that man’s blindness, and by the operation of the same Divine Law working within him he can lessen its impact. There are two important facts to be noted. (1) We ourselves and none else made us as we are in body, in morals, in mind; (2) our diseases of the body, weaknesses in moral character, etc., are results of ignorance, of our acting without knowledge in the past.

The Law of Divine Justice works all the time and is truly merciful. How? By overcoming the ignorance we remove our evils and destroy our limitations. This lesson also comes out of another story of the Bible, that of the blind man. He was cured by Jesus of his blindness and when the enemies of Jesus, the Pharisees, questioned him, the man said that he was born blind but that Jesus gave him sight. What does that mean? Remember what Jesus said, “the works of god should be made manifest in him.” Theosophically, it means that the Divine Law of Justice working within us produces circumstances, which remove the blindness of sight, or mind or heart, when we sincerely and earnestly desire change by seeking and acquiring knowledge. But we might say that the blind man was *cured by Jesus* and not by his own god within. It has twofold significance. Jesus represents knowledge; suppose that the man himself had the knowledge that Jesus had, then he could have cured himself. Secondly, just as parents are the instruments of the Law of Divine Justice, so also every human being we come in contact with is an instrument of that Law. Jesus was the instrument through whom the great Law fulfilled itself. This is an important point. All of us are closely knit together; we are not only connected with our blood relations, but with all—with friends and enemies, acquaintances and strangers. The Law of Interdependence or the Law of Brotherhood is an important aspect of Reincarnation.

Like the blind man of the story, each one of us has some blindness

in him. Not only is the power of our sight different, so that some can see more objects or read more minute types, but in each one of us the light of the mind and the sight of the heart is also different. The capacity to love purely and unselfishly is the sight of the heart; each one of us has the capacity, but it is a limited capacity. By right knowledge about its correct use we can increase that capacity to love.

We revolve in rebirth for this specific task—to remove our weaknesses and our blemishes by the aid of knowledge we already possess, and by obtaining more knowledge. But if we do not acquire knowledge about enhancing our virtues and capacities, we will act in ignorance and then we will go wrong. For instance, if we do not know how to handle and direct our love into pure and noble channels, and allow it to be exploited by others, then we will err and bring upon ourselves great misery and anguish. So all the time, if we want to get away from the triangle of “pain, evil and vice,” we must use what we have already acquired, intelligently, and gather more knowledge to obtain further experience in a beneficent way.

Theosophy teaches that the purpose of Reincarnation is the conquest of Nature by understanding the Laws of Nature, whereby the human soul unfolds to its fullest extent. All of us, here and now, must take account of that soul, which we truly *are*. In this life, in this body and mind, the soul that we are picks up the old thread of activity by which progress goes on. All of us, without exception, possess knowledge, for all are divine souls, but divine in *essence* and in the *process of growth*, and therefore that knowledge is not complete but only *partial*. Let us illustrate. Everyone knows how to switch on an electric light; this is like the common fund of knowledge that virtue should be followed. But some people know more than merely switching on light. When a fusing occurs most people seem helpless; only a few know what to do and they, in a few minutes, restore light where darkness was! But even they become helpless when some major complication arises and then they send for an electrician. But suppose that something has gone

wrong at the Central Power House, then even the cleverest electrician becomes helpless. What does it mean? In this world there is a progressive system of knowledge and experience, and those who know less are dependent upon those who know more, and those who know more are willing to aid those who know less.

The practical lesson to be noted is this: we have to find out our own place in the scheme of human evolution; how much do we know, how much do we practise what we know; of what are we ignorant, and what steps are we taking to remove that ignorance? When we recognize that each event brings experience and enriches our knowledge, that every human being we come in contact with can aid us and enable us to aid others, life becomes most interesting. We are not here only to learn; we are not here only to teach; but we are here to grow and to progress through a dual process of learning and teaching.

So long as we are not perfect, so long there is blindness in us. The central message of reincarnation is hope. It offers certitude of our future. We are a mixture of good and evil because of the knowledge already acquired and because of ignorance which remains to be dispelled. Most people suffer badly not only through the bad karma of past lives but through false beliefs and lack of available knowledge in this life. Many forget the very purpose of life, which is soul-evolution.

What is the end of evolution? When all the lessons one can learn as man are learnt, he emerges in his full Perfection. What does Perfection imply? Wisdom which solves every mystery in Nature; Love ever-expanding, which recognizes no distinctions and differences of any kind but which pours itself out on all men, and more, on all kingdoms of Nature. Such Men of Perfection are the Elder Brothers (*Mahatmas*) of our Race, who teach what they themselves learnt in their own past lives. And what they have done, we also can do.