

The Metaphysic and Psychology of Theosophy - Part 2 by Bhagavan Das

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16. THE SCIENCE AND ART OF FEELING

Of this Science of the Self, this Science of the Svabhāva underlying and constituting the Universe, a very important and integral part is the Science of Bhakti, Love Divine; to understand and practise which, it is necessary to study the emotions; for "this constantly changing and moving life that surrounds us is formed by the hearts of men, and as we learn to understand their constitution and meaning, will we grow able by degrees to read the larger word of life".

The modern evolutionist develops all existing social institutions, domestic, political, ecclesiastical, professional, industrial — out of the primitive patriarch-priest-king, with the help of assumptions of emotions and their expressions, continually at work. These are allowed even in the lower animals. Herbert Spencer describes how "on the approach of some formidable Newfoundland or mastiff, a small spaniel, [Page 2] in the extremity of its *terror*, throws itself on its back with legs in the air. Instead of *threatening* resistance, by growls and showing of teeth, as it might have, had not resistance been *hopeless*, it spontaneously assumes the attitude that would result from defeat in battle; tacitly saying 'I am conquered, and at your mercy'. Clearly then, besides certain modes of behaviour expressing *affection*, which are established still earlier in creatures lower than man, there are established certain modes of behaviour expressing subjection". The italicised words name the emotions assumed. So peace, defiance, arrogance, civility, respect, self-restraint, propriativeness, rudeness, insubordination, desires, passions, maternal feeling, sex-feeling, wish to be liked, maternal yearning, humility, love, favour, prayer, sympathy, submission, grief, gaiety, imitation, fear, deception, independence, callousness, etc., are the words indicative of emotions which are abundantly used by the evolutionists, and the existence of these emotions is constantly *taken for granted* by them and employed to explain developments step by step, without any attempt to explain the genesis and evolution of the emotions themselves. Also, somehow, the worse emotions are magnified and the better ones minimised in these explanations — possibly because of the rooted feeling that they belong more naturally to earlier "animal-like" and "savage" conditions, and of the persistent notion, we may almost say bias, that civilisation has grown up out of [Page 3] savagery. The "*struggle* for existence" is emphasised over much; the at least equally operative and unmistakable and indispensable "*alliance* for existence" is almost overlooked. The idea that savage-dom may be a condition of degeneracy from older civilisations, while not wholly repudiated, is allowed somewhat reluctantly in a few unmistakable cases. The analogy of a human family, wherein three or four generations might be living simultaneously, all the members at very different stages of individual development, is not utilised sufficiently in interpreting the facts of the sociological history of the Human Race as a whole; nor is the primitive and innocent "savage", corresponding to the childhood of the individual, sufficiently distinguished from the degenerate and cruel savage, corresponding to other and less healthy stages in the life of the individual, though recognition is undoubtedly growing of the two

distinct kinds of "savages", viz., the primitive and the degenerate. *The Secret Doctrine* supplies the needed corrections on this point, as stated before. A study of the psychology of the emotions helps us to understand in what ways the less healthy conditions arise, and how they may be treated, from stage to stage of the individual as well as the racial life, so as to minimise pains and magnify pleasures, and enable the wheel of each cycle to run smoothly in its appointed course. We need no proof that the family, the clan, the tribe, the race, [Page 4] has its root and source in the emotions of love, and all integrations of individuals and groups and organised societies and nations are ultimately due to the emotions of sympathy and mutual helpfulness; while *per contra*, partitions, separations, dispersals, wars, destructions and dissolutions of the same are due to the emotions of antipathy and discordant selfishness. It behooves us, therefore, if we wish to promote the cause of co-operation and peaceful progress, carefully to sort out all the emotions which help it on from those which hinder it.

Modern psychology, apparently, continues to believe that each emotion or feeling is something *suis generis*, that an organic connection between emotion and emotion is not traceable, that it is vain to try to reduce any one into terms of any other, and that a classification of these mental phenomena that is genuine, genetic, and not arbitrary, is impossible.

But this is not the view of the ancient Indian thinkers. They classify all the emotions into two groups, *rāga* and *dvesha*, love and hate, sympathy and antipathy, like and dislike. There is not space, and this is not the occasion, to go into details. We must confine ourselves to the barest possible sketch, leaving the reader to pursue the study, if he cares to, in works specially dealing with this subject and included in Theosophical literature. [See *The Science of the Emotion*, by Bhagavan Das] [Page 5]

Sympathy, love, attraction, liking, as has been generally observed, go with pleasure; hate, dislike, repulsion, antipathy, with pain. *The Yoga-Sutras* (III, 7, 8) expressly state this; so also does the *Bhagavad-Gita* indicate this in many verses (III, 34 and others).

To understand what pleasure and pain are, we have to go to those ultimates of the universe, the Self and the Not-Self, which cannot be explained away, nor explained into anything simpler, but which explain all else. In the words of Manu (IV, 160), to feel the power of the Self is pleasure, to feel the power of another-than-Self is pain. The feeling of the "more-ness", the expansion, of the Self, is the feeling of pleasure. The feeling of the "lessness", the contraction, of the Self, is the feeling of pain. This is so true that psychophysicists have observed "that pleasantness is attended by increase of bodily volume, due to the expansion of arteries running just beneath the skin . . . Unpleasantness is accompanied by the reverse phenomena ". (Titchener, *An Outline of Psychology*, 1902, chapter V, page 118) The instinct of language correctly describes faces as expanding into a smile and contracting into a frown.

These forces of attraction and repulsion, in their simplest elemental forms, are the appetite for food and the turning away from what is not such or the reverse of such. In their more complex and higher forms they become love and hate proper, as between individual [Page 6] and individual, and no longer between individual and food. The ultimate fact is the same, that all likes and dislikes, whether for articles of food and poison or friends and enemies, are forms of desire, the desire for Self-maintenance, Self-realisation. But inasmuch as the Self has a lower aspect — that wherein it has identified itself with one particular limited physical body and become a separate individual; and a higher aspect — that wherein it ensouls all physical bodies and is one and common in all; therefore complications arise and appetites become

transformed into emotions. There is no reason for the progenerative instinct except that the Unlimited One Self cannot be cribbed, cabined and confined in one small piece of matter, but ever seeks to assert its Infinity by multiplication. There is no reason for the parental instinct of protecting the young, except that the Self of the parents is preserving *itself* in the progeny. All unselfish love in all its shapes is the light and glory of the One Self. At the same time, in order that even such spiritual Love may have an opportunity for manifestation, there must be material coefficients, bodies; and so, even such love cannot be wholly dissociated from a certain minimum of that selfish desire which preserves one's own body. But the two are as the ends of a see-saw. When selfish love is strongest, impersonal or unselfish love is at its lowest; not wholly absent even then; for the cruelest tyrant wishes to keep the slave alive to give opportunity for the exercise of his [Page 7] unchecked will upon him. Briefly, when we find that our being, our life, is enhanced by another *individual*, directly or indirectly, we feel the *emotion* of love. And on the other hand, when it is diminished and reduced, we feel hate towards him.

Analysing in more detail, we find that love implies: (1) That "contact", in the most general sense, with an object, has at some time been found to result in pleasure. (2) That there is a memory of this past fact. (3) That there is an expectation of a similar pleasure occurring in the future on the contact being repeated. (4) That there is a desire for such pleasure and such repetition of contact and association, and (5) That while contact and association are possible, an absolute union or absorption is not. Where such absorption is possible, as between feeder and food, the desire remains as desire only. It does not advance to the condition of emotion proper, which is the attitude of one living individual towards another living individual. Such individuals can enhance each other's personal being, *i.e.*, each other's bodily life, only indirectly by various kinds of services and attentions.

Hate may be analysed similarly.

If this analysis is correct, then we may define emotion briefly as the desire of one individual to associate with or dissociate from another individual, combined with an intellectual cognition of the other individual's ability to help or hinder his well-being. As the first [Page 8] subdivision of emotion in general, we find that where the cognition is one of helpfulness we have love; where it is of hindrance we have hate.

At the next step, for further subdivisions, the word *ability* gives us the clue. The ability of the other individual may be superior to one's own, or equal, or inferior.

On the side of love then, where we have the consciousness of equality, we have affection, or love proper. Where we have the consciousness that the other is superior, we feel reverence. Where we know the other to be inferior, we feel benevolence.

So on the side of hate, we have hate proper or anger, fear, and scorn.

These may be regarded as the six principal emotions, the psychical forces, by the interplay of which between individuals, the various sociological institutions are evolved, and which, by action and reaction amongst themselves, develop the most subtle and elusive forms and phases of sentiments and feelings appertaining to the complex forms of "civilised" life, and the very varied and artificial relations of human

beings brought about by such.

Thus we may readily distinguish grades and degrees under each of these six: *e.g.*, respect, esteem, admiration, reverence, adoration, worship, under the one sub-head of love towards the superior; or superciliousness, contempt, scorn, disdain, etc., under that of hate towards the inferior. [Page 9]

It will be found on examination that all possible emotions can be analysed into shades and mixtures of these primary ones combined with differences in that element of intellectual or cognitional ideas which is an essential factor of their composition. Thus jealousy is repulsion felt by one individual towards another, plus the consciousness of a possible or even probable superiority of a special kind thereof, which superiority will enable that person to gain exclusively and appropriate for himself something which is desired by both.

Wonder is attraction, the desire to approach, to imitate, plus the consciousness of the superior greatness of the object in some unexpected and extraordinary respect or degree, and of the uncertainty of one's ability to so approach or imitate him. The extraordinariness is the cause of the uncertainty. The physical manifestation is a general expansion of the features, open eyes, open mouth, "wide-eyed wonder" — consequent on the feeling of pleasure, accompanied by the arrest of motion — "standing stock-still," "struck dumb" — which corresponds naturally to the uncertainty above mentioned. In the case of the emotion expressed by such a phrase as: "I am lost in wonder at your audacity", the wonder may be genuine, when the above analysis will apply, or ironical; and then, in the analysis, repulsion should replace attraction, such wonder being a form of scorn, the superior greatness and extraordinariness being in a [Page 10] respect which the utterer considers evil. Disgust is fear in some respects, plus scorn in others.

Vanity, by ordinary usage, is something reprehensible. Yet it is a sentiment on the side of attraction. It is love for the sake of being loved more. It is the wish to please in order to obtain more pleasure in return. That the word has acquired evil associations is due to two causes. Even when vanity is "innocent or childlike", it is an object of contempt to unloving and hard and egoistic individuals; and secondly, the word is sometimes used in a different sense altogether, as a form of pride, a different emotion. Shame may be said to be vanity, plus the consciousness of something in oneself which takes away the power of pleasing others so as to attract them.

These few illustrations must suffice here to indicate that all emotions are capable of reduction into terms of love and hate, and none is *sui generis* except these two.

From the above it follows that the virtues and vices of mankind are only the emotions become fixed and wide-reaching. The emotion of love, originally aroused from time to time, and finding vent in helping a small circle, spouse, children, parents, relations, friends, when it becomes a settled habit, and is felt as a continual undercurrent of "feeling-tone" in the consciousness towards all with whom the individual comes into contact, and even towards those who are absent, and ultimately for the whole of creation, becomes that altruism which is the sum-total of all [Page 11] the virtues. So repulsion becomes egoism, that selfishness which is the essence of all vices. To each emotion will be found a corresponding virtue or vice. Very often language gives the same name to the temporary and fleeting aspect as well as to the

more permanent one. Parental love, aroused and exercised from time to time, becomes confirmed into persistent benevolence to the weak. Thankfulness and appreciation, often brought into play, settle down into a habit of seriousness and earnest aspiration, and the chivalrous virtue of reverence for all that is good and great. So, on the other side, passing fits of anger or scorn, becoming habitual, make up the vice of peevishness or malevolence, or that shallow mockery which is "the fume of little minds".

Having thus, all too cursorily, seen that the emotions are the material of which are made up the virtues and the vices which stimulate and determine the healthy development and happiness, or otherwise, of all social conditions, institutions, organisations, we ought next to consider what laws govern the mutual action and reaction, the mutual organisation and evocation of these emotions. For only when we have determined these laws shall we have in our possession an organon of education, for the deliberate cultivation, governance and elimination, of good, useful and evil emotions respectively.

Observation shows that amongst average individuals, in whom neither selfishness nor unselfishness is [Page 12] unmistakably pronounced and predominant, "emotions tend to create their own likeness" (using "likeness" to mean another emotion, *on the same side*, out of the two main categories). Love will produce love; anger, anger; pride, pride; fear, fear; distrust, distrust; and so on between "equal" individuals. If they are unequal, scorn will beget fear, and fear scorn; compassion will generate gratitude and reverence, and reverence compassion; and so on.

But when an individual is predominantly selfish, over-firmly set on the Path of Pursuit of things worldly and material, the Pravrtti-Marga, then emotions in another, whether of the love side or of the hate side, will tend to arouse in himself corresponding emotions of his own side and nature, *viz.*, the hate side. Thus humility, accompanying weakness and prayer, will arouse that contempt which distorts and perverts the benevolent word "pitiabile" into the scornful word "pitiful"; compassionate greatness will breed awed fear and distrust and suspicion; the advances of love cause repulsion and anger. And much more so, of course, the emotions of the same evil kind, in another, will arouse evil ones in him.

On the other hand, when the individual has consciously or subconsciously passed on to the Path of Renunciation of worldliness, Nivrtti, self-sacrifice, unselfishness, then even the evil emotions of another, and much more the good ones, will arouse in him only corresponding good emotions. Fear will arouse [Page 13] compassion and the effort to reassure and soothe and help; pride will evoke the sad humility of friendliness, or a quietly smiling and paternal benevolence; anger and irritation will evoke only more gentle patience and friendliness and effort to appease; and so on. These laws can be worked out into the minutest details and correspondences.

17. ITS USES

Having found these laws, we have found our weapons of war against our enemies — the vices and sins of man, our tools of industry and helpfulness for the happy and peaceful progress of all. We now understand, in terms of reason and not merely of sentiment, what the genealogical relation is between the emotions, and why hatred can never cease by hatred but only by love; why God is love, and why it is absolutely necessary to achieve first the kingdom of the righteous and loving spirit, for thereupon, and only thereupon, will all the riches of matter add themselves. And because we have the understanding, because we have the power — and "knowledge is power", and "to know where danger lies is half the way

to victory" — therefore we can now deliberately compel ourselves to love instead of hate any and all living creatures, who are all, equally with ourselves, manifestations of the same common Self; we can compel ourselves to love the individual, even when it is [Page 14] necessary to cause pain to his body for the ends of justice to himself and to others, in the spirit of the surgeon who hurts only to cure.

It may be said that knowledge of the right course of conduct is not always enough to induce us to pursue it, and that the flesh is often weak when the spirit is willing enough; but the mere fact that we have *cared* at all to follow the study, and have had the patience to work out the results thereof, is itself proof that the needed desire to do right, to follow out in practice the result of the theoretical studies, *has arisen* also, while the other and opposite desire, which blindly runs after its objects without caring to ask why and whether it will hurt a fellow-creature thereby or not, has begun to wane, sufficiently to allow all this study of theories and causes, though it may yet be very far from being properly subdued. It is now only a question of time and perseverance; the Higher Self, new-born within the man, will wax steadily, and the old lower self weaken, till Universal Brotherhood, nay, Universal Identity of Spirit and Organic Unity of nature is realised by him. And when it is realised by a fair number of human beings, then the hoped-for Federation of the World will come.

Herbert Spencer, philosopher of encyclopedic knowledge and dispassionate thinking and careful reasoning, writing in 1879, says that: " Co-operation . . . is necessarily hindered both by ignorance of one another's words, and by unlikeness of thought [Page 15] and feeling. . . Those who are wholly unlike in their emotional natures or in their intellectual natures, perplex one another by unexpected conduct. . . . Diversities of custom, too, become causes of dissension. Where a food eaten by one people is regarded by another with disgust, where an animal held sacred by one is by the other treated with contempt, where a salute which the one expects is never made by the other, there must be continually generated alienations which hinder joint efforts. Other things equal, facility of co-operation will be proportionate to the amount of fellow-feeling. ... In the absence of considerable likeness, the political aggregates formed are unstable, and can be maintained only by a coercion which sometime or other is sure to fail. Though other causes have conspired, yet this has doubtless been a main cause of dissolution of great empires in past ages." [*Principles of Sociology*, ii, 277, 278.)

And the same benevolent and at that time aged philosopher of nearly eighty years, writing some twenty years later, at the close of the last century and of his work and life, in conclusion of his great system of Synthetic Philosophy, on *The Prospect of Human Institutions*, gropes doubtful, dim-visioned, now hoping, now fearing, and sees in improvement of moral character and increase of voluntary and conscious co-operation the only hope, but sees no certainty of such improvement and such increase. He could [Page 16] rescribe no sure way of helping these on. He had contented himself with the word Unknowable, and had not taken the pains to see that this which was truly Unknowable, no doubt (for by what sense shall we know the Knower ?), was also the most known, the nearest, the dearest, his very Self which, unknown and unknowable by other-than-Self, is ever most intimately known to Itself. Who can know the Knower of all, except Itself ? Spencer's vision was turned largely outwards; even the facts of psychology he examined more objectively than subjectively; the love-aspect of the Self did not manifest in him very actively in this life; and the sanctifying touch of *vairâgya*, divine discontent and mystic aspiration, he did not feel. He had other and most valuable work to do and he did it; but by itself, the work is incomplete. And this is no wonder, for the very condition of manifestation is inequilibrium. He did not sufficiently bring home to himself, and analyse to the bottom, the phenomena of emotion; he did not cultivate them. He felt the lack in old age, and borrowed neighbours' children to play with. Beautiful and pathetic spectacle! If he

had known a more passionate love earlier, and studied the ancient literatures and other aspects of life, e.g., the superphysical, which, gentle philosopher as he was, and ever on his guard against biases, he could not help treating with some contempt — he might have seen the truths which complete his system. He might have seen the working, [Page 17] in the psychical half of the world-process also, of the swing of that evolution and dissolution which he saw somewhat incompletely in the physical half. He would have seen that these two halves of the swing are made by the descent of Spirit into matter and its re-ascent out of it; by the more Impersonal becoming more Personal, and again more Impersonal on an ever higher level; by the Universal Consciousness appearing to contract into Egoism, and again appearing to expand out of it into Universalism; he would have seen that Will, Imagination and Activity, the Ānanda, Chit and Sat of the Vedāntin, were the three aspects of that Consciousness which guided and governed all manifestations; and he would have seen that persistent enquiry leads to a substitution, for "the theory of Creation by an extra-cosmical Personal God", after a passage through "the theory of Evolution", on a higher level, of "the theory of perpetual Creation and Dissolution of all forms, actions and relations by the Omniscience, Omnipresence and Omnipotent All-love of the Immanent Universal Self".

If this typical modern scientist-philosopher could have seen all this, if he could have completed the Philosophy of Change with the Philosophy of Change-lessness, he would have had greater hope that after the sway of the militant and then of the capitalist and industrial egoism, the reign of co-operative universalism, or at least humanism, would supervene [Page 18] more and more fully, and the race pass into a period of the genuine higher Socialism which believes in giving rather than taking.

18. THE CONDITION OF TRUE CO-OPERATION AND THE SCIENCE OF CONDUCT

A recent writer (H. C. McCook: *A Study in Natural Civics*) says: " If Socialism as a form of human government would be equally or even approximately successful, it must first attain that perfect individual discipline and self-control, self-abnegation, self-surrender, and self-devotion to the good of the whole community that one sees in a commonwealth of ants". Those who have found reason to believe in the psychical, as well as the material, swing of evolution and involution, have no doubt that the condition of the commonwealth of ants will be attained by men on a far higher level, in the course of time. But we may well ask each other what we can do to facilitate the accrual of this much-to-be-desired internal condition of self-denial. A worldly motive, such as the gain of some object of sense, or an industrial or political objective, can, if at all, bring about such a result for a short time and amongst a limited number of individuals only, e.g., till the money is made, the law passed, the opposite party circumvented, the land seized, the enemy defeated and the war brought to a successful issue, and amongst only the members [Page 19] of the organised combine, or the class, or the nation. Yet worse, in integrating one set of individuals, differentiation from another set is emphasised, the spirit of aggression and greed of sensuous things strengthened, and by the action and reaction thereof internecine struggles are generated which rapidly nullify all the gains of the artificial integration. Therefore no such material unity serves our purpose; it is but a false and deceitful imitation of the Spiritual Unity which alone is adequate to the great task of bringing about the free surrender of the part to the whole, of the small self to the Great Self. The Buddha has said that Right Action arises from Right Desire, and Right Desire arises from Right Knowledge. Until the individual acquires the Right Knowledge that he is not the small but the Great Self, until the primal error of Avidya, this error of Self-limitation, is corrected, this thick veil of Self-ignorance and Self-forgetfulness removed from the eye of the man, until he sees that he is identified with not only his own body, or family, or parish or province, or country, or tribe, or clan, or caste, or creed, or nation, or sex, or colour, or race, but verily with all life — until then will the Right Desire, that is Universal Love, not

arise fully within him; and unless such yearning for Universal Brotherliness arise within him, Right Action, continual helpfulness, the life of sacrifice, will not proceed out of him. [Page 20]

19. THE FINAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE ONENESS OF THE UNIVERSAL SELF AS THE ONE PURIFIER OF THE HEART

Hence it is that the Vedas say that without knowledge there is no liberation, emancipation in the fullest sense, not only social or political but spiritual, no final and real loosening of the bond of the heart, of the hard knot of egoism; as, on the other hand, without a preliminary diminution of that selfish interest which narrows and distorts the vision, the arising of disinterested and therefore true and universal Knowledge is not possible; and Krshna declares that there is no purifier like unto knowledge; and that after the purification, the individual must not and cannot cease from action, but must and will ever perform action without thought of fruit for himself but only of fruit for all, forgetting himself in the Great Self, intoxicated with devotion to the Supreme and the Whole, the sum-total of all Life.

Therefore the first and most important step in the facilitation of the longed-for millennium is the spread of the knowledge that the Self in all is One; the diligent crying aloud of the good message, so that it shall fall upon all ears and abide in some minds at least, to nurture the tender shoots of love; and thus gradually shall men more and more target, or learn to overlook, each other's superficial unlikenesses of thinking and feeling, of clothing and colouring, of [Page 21] saluting and speaking, which now alienate them so much from each other, and feel more and more the deep-seated likeness, nay, identity of Spirit, which should bring them all together in the bonds of love. When this old Wisdom is newly born again amongst men, with the perennial newness and freshness of beauty and the beauty of newness and freshness, then shall the differences of form and colour and temperament and caste and vocation, which now separate them, also begin to abate, and all shall begin to tread more or less diligently the triune path of Wise and self-Sacrificing Love, of Jñāna-Karma-Bhakti, of Universal Love Divine.

20. CONCLUSION

Verily, Love Universal, Love Divine, inspired by the Knowledge of the Unity of all life, and inspiring the good Conduct of deliberate helpfulness to all — such Love enables man to touch Nirvana on earth and transforms earth into heaven, the kingdom of heaven which is within us always. When we can weep with one eye for the woes of the world and smile with the other for its joys; when we know the comedy of knowledge and feel the tragedy of feeling simultaneously; when we feel the heartache of the mother over her child's broken toys, and all her endless worries and anxieties, and also the guardian father's smiling assurance that all is well and nothing [Page 22] lost which cannot be replaced; when we feel at once sad over breaking bodies and glad over the deathless Spirit; when we know and feel that the insect's flutter, the river's roll, the ocean's surge, the wind's unceasing sigh, the march of the moons, planets, suns, stars — is all part of One and the self-same Life, *My Life*, one continuity of living motion, the endless manifestations of One Living Energy, the incessant transformations of One Living Substance which is Consciousness — then indeed we sense Nirvāna even in the flesh, dimly at first, more and more clearly afterwards. For surely the Spirit is no more distant from, no less near to, any form of matter, gross or subtle, than to any other. All planes and grades and shades of matter are equidistant from It, all equally within Its consciousness; all equally governed and guided by the laws of the three aspects of that Consciousness as set forth in the Science of the Self. And liberation does not mean a change of many

conditions, but of one condition. The mental vision that was turned outwards has only to be turned inwards. Then physical science is converted into Spiritual Metaphysic. The light shines ever, we have only to turn our eyes to it. When the veiling cloud of egoism melts away, then the Universal Sun shines forth..