

Eugenics, Ethics and Metaphysics by Bhagavan Das

The substance of this paper is taken from two notes in the new edition
of *Krshna, a Study in the Theory of Avatāras* by Bhagavan Das.

Published in 1930

Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai [Madras] India
The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras. India

[Page 1] THE subject of eugenics, the production of fine offspring, is rightly occupying a portion of the attention of the more thoughtful section of the public in the free and independent West. The *dependent* East has little time and energy left to think of it. In the West, the practical outcome of the thought spent on the subject seems to have taken the shape mostly of *physical culture*. Psychical culture seems to be rather neglected. Magazines devoted to the topic are published, especially in the young and exuberant and superlative U. S. A., which make a cult of the physique and publish, month after month, fine pictures of splendid masculine, feminine, and infantine muscle-swathed limbs. No doubt, “The body is the soul made visible”, and a fine body is a most desirable, not to say an enviable, possession. “The glory that was Greece” enshrined a good portion of that glory in splendid human bodies. [Page 2] But physical culture is not enough. It seems that psychical, ethical, spiritual culture — by fostering and strengthening the *spiritual affections* of the family, as distinguished from *sex-passion*, with the help of ennobling and elevating religious exercises of *bhakti*-devotion directed towards *high ideals* — is far more necessary than mere physical culture. While the strength and shape of the muscles of the body may be temporarily improved by the latter, beauty of *mind* and *face*, and lasting health, and virility of the finer kinds, is scarcely likely to be secured without the former.

The pampering of the *sensuous*, physical, passion-aspect of sex, of *kāma*-lust instead of *bhakti*-love; the belittling and despising of male and female virginity before marriage; the ignoring and flouting of the psycho-spiritual strength of will and refinement of mind and lasting freshness of emotion that are gained by such virgin *brahma-charya* [*Brahma-charya* means “the pursuit of *Brahma*”, “the training, the disciplining the course of conduct during the student-stage, which achieves, secures, stores up *Brahma*”; and *Brahma* means (i) the Infinite Self, the Principle of Universal Life, (ii) Knowledge of that Self and all other knowledge founded on It, and therefore infinite as the world-process, (iii) the seed of life with potency of infinite multiplication in it] before entering the household life, (as insisted on by Manu for man and woman equally); of which pampering, *etc.*, there is much indication in western literature today, (e.g., Mr. Ben Lindsey's *The Revolt of Modern Youth* and *Companionate Marriage* [Page 3] published in 1927 and 1928, in which useful and mischievous ideas are greatly mixed up); these have already led to the *war-madness* of 1914-1918, as will be seen when the deep underlying psychological causes of the Great War are studied (— it was the same in the case of the Mahābhārata War—); and they will probably do so again, in a worse way, and will complete the ruin of civilisation, if not checked in time. Hate is the twin-brother of Lust, and simply cannot be separated from it. “No pains, no gains” is a sound metaphysical axiom. To think that Nature can be cheated and defeated by artificial contraceptive devices, and that it is possible to filch sensual pleasures from her without paying heavy price, is to imagine that the problems and theorems of geometry can be solved even after flouting all its definitions, postulates, and axioms. At least so it seems to some of us.

Science *may* succeed in multiplying pleasures infinitely and abolishing pains altogether. But metaphysics seems to say no. War there must be; but human beings have a choice; they can carry it on *within* themselves, between their higher nature and their lower nature; or *without*, between each other's physical bodies, with murder and devastation on a vast scale. Pain there must be; but human beings have a choice; they can inflict and suffer it, each on and in his own lower nature; or on one another's bodies and minds. By the [Page 4] former choice they rise higher in civilisation of soul and body. By the latter, they fall lower. Indulgence of the selfish and coarse passions, feeds, by its effluvia, corresponding lower spirits, evil genii, *yakshas* and *rakshas*, [These words seem to mean disease-microbes, as well as evil spirits.] and strengthens and attracts them, and they help to hasten the downward course. Fostering the higher nature, similarly provides ethereal nourishment for the higher *devas*, beneficent spirits, angels, and evokes their help for the upward progress of human civilisation. Modern western science has come to recognize the fact of *symbiosis*, *co-operation*, *mutual influence*, *mutual dependence*, between the vegetable and the animal kingdoms. It will, by and by, if permitted by the menacing armies of Lust and Hate and Greed to carry on its work, come to recognize similar symbiosis between these and the *deva* – kingdom (angels, *farishtas*, *malâyaks*, good and bad).

It has been said by some writers, e.g., Mr. Ben Lindsey, in his books above-mentioned, that contraceptive devices are *revolutionizing morals*. This may be true as a fact, if *morals*, in the sentence means current notions about morals and corresponding current practices. But it is possible that the fact will prove unfortunate, and bring deep misery and confusion upon nations in the long or the short run. For biological and psychological laws and facts lie at the root of human, life; while civics, [Page 5] politics, economics, and all the outward trappings of civilisation, are only the branches and leaves and flowers. Canker at the root will wither all these. The fact may also be true, in an even fortunate sense, if the revolution is confined carefully within limits, and weeds out only that part of “ancient good which time has made uncouth”.

Any way, the essential law of Nature, and therefore of Morals, seems likely to remain the same, however much superficial and inessential forms may be revolutionized. And that law is the law of action and reaction, which seems to be the full and complete form of the law of cause-and-effect; so metaphysic seems to say.

All Morals are fundamentally based on the facts and laws of Metaphysics, (as Manu expressly says, VI, 82, and XII, 85 — 115). The essence of Morals is nothing else than the mathematics of the permutations and combinations of just these six terms, *viz.*, selfishness, unselfishness, dutifulness (which in another aspect is play-fulness), and pleasure, pain, peace (or, in another aspect, *Lilā* — enjoyment). Selfishness, unselfishness, dutifulness also, and pleasure, pain, peace too, belong to the *upādhis*, the bodies, the dense and subtle sheaths of the Self, *i.e.*, to the pseudo-selves; not to the Self-Universal, to which belongs *Lilā*, the play of the World-Drama, in which all these are included equally. Selfishly give pain to another now, receive and suffer corresponding pain afterwards — this is *pāpa*, sin, and its [Page 6] consequence; unselfishly give pleasure now, receive corresponding pleasure afterwards — this is *punya*, merit, and its consequence; give pain or pleasure, as a matter of duty, without any personal feeling, in the spirit of an honest public servant, or a debtor repaying a debt, receive none afterwards, or receive them, if any, in corresponding spirit, dutifully — this is *naish-karmya*, duty, and its consequence; play-fully give pain or pleasure now, receive them play-fully afterwards — this is *naish-karmya* and its consequence in another aspect, *Lilā*. Such is the distinction between (1) *nis-trai-gunya* or *param-ārtha*, duty (or play), (2) *swārtha*, *self-seeking*, selfishness (or vice and sin), and (3) *parārtha*, *other-seeking*,

unselfishness (or virtue and merit).

This seems to be the significance of the law of action and reaction, in the ethical aspect.

“After pleasure, pain; after pain, pleasure”. सुखस्यानंतरं दुःखं दुःखस्यानंतरं सुखम्
They are always balancing up, in the long run or the short run, on all possible scales. *Punya* and *pāpa*, meritorious karma or sinful, chains of gold or chains of iron, pain first and pleasure afterwards or pleasure first and pain after — both have to be equal and opposite, lest the Repose of the Supreme be disturbed. The Zero, the Endless Circle, the Eternal Rest, the Absolute Equilibrium, the Universal Changeless Motionlessness, [Page 7] the Infinite Absence of all Finites, necessitates, creates, imposes everywhere this law of the mutual abolition of paired opposites by equal action and reaction. It thereby provides at once for all possible Arbitrariness, Chance, Contingency, Disorder, Lawlessness of un-reasoning Life-Desire, *Trshnā*, *Tanhā*, Will-to-live, Libido, in the Nature of the World-process, and also for *pari passu* Obviation thereof, by Lawful and Reason-able Negation.

As indicated in the Gītā:

सर्वारंभा द्वि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः । xviii, 48.
कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥ iv, 18.
यत्तदग्रे विषमित्र परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।
परिणामे विषमित्र यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ॥ xviii, 37, 38.
नादत्ते कस्यचित्पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः । v, 15.
निर्मानमोहा जितसंगदोषा अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
द्वंद्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैर्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥ xv, 5.
पुण्यं च पापं च पापे (*Shārīraka Bhāshya*).

“There is no enterprise, no course of action, that does not involve both good and evil; sin carries merit in its heart, merit sin; he who realizes this, he is wise, he performs all actions with equanimity, in the spirit of duty, he has done all there is to do; that which is as venom first is as nectar afterwards, and that which is as ambrosia to begin with is as poison in the end; the Supreme Self is equally free [Page 8] of both; (for both virtue and vice, merit and sin, are equally bonds, equally chains, though the one be of gold and the other of iron, even as creditor and debtor are both equally bound, to each other by the loan, though the bond is pleasurable asset to the one and painful debt to the other; and both belong to the pseudo-self, the *jīvā*, the em-bodied soul or the en-soul-ed body); and the soul that is tired of both pleasure and pain, and of all the countless pairs of opposites that are summed up in these two, gives up egoistic separateness and egoistic attachment, gives up clinging desire, accepts all befallings with resignation while doing its duties scrupulously, frees itself from the great error of separate egoism from which all pains and pleasures arise, sees that all actions of all separate seeming selves are really only the drama-imaginings of the One Self, and rests peacefully in the Eternal, knowing it to be him-Self”.

When it is said that *dharmas*, morals, change from age to age (*Manu*, I, 85), differ for different persons (*Gītā*, XVIII, 41-46), are a matter of convention, what is meant is that a particular form of relationship

between human beings, with corresponding mutual rights and duties, which was found so long to yield more pleasure and less pain on the whole, has, by gradual change of circumstances, and, usually, by the development of an excess (which, indeed, may be regarded as the prime sin) in one respect or another, begun to do the opposite, [Page 9] and so needs to be changed. But such variations need not, in any given case, of any individual or group of individuals, be regarded as constituting new principles of morals, but only as other forms of ordinary morals.

Thus, in respect of sex-relations and marriage — with which, and with property (essentially food, clothing, shelter, implements, etc.), as concerned with the fundamental instincts of self-preservation, self-enhancement and self-multiplication, morals are most intimately connected in human thought — the human race has tried scores of forms, all ranging between monogamy and promiscuity; and, in respect of possessions, between nearly all separate property and nearly all common property; and it is still experimenting, and will go on doing so, until the human body again changes its form, and hermaphrodite or a-sexual reproduction supervenes again, as in vegetable and protozoic forms today, and, according to Purānic and Theosophical literature, in the very early human races, millions of years ago. The *Smritis* and the *Purānas*, in their descriptions of the various races of animals, (feline, ursine, bovine, aquiline, columbine, etc.), men, rākshasas, devas, etc., mention dozens of kinds of matings and of progeny. Yet the general principle underlying all the forms seems to be always the same. All possible kinds of marriages and domestic arrangements, as of social, economic, political, aesthetic, religious, etc., institutions and forms, are [Page 10] everlastingly present, in seed and potency, in the Human Sūtrātmā, the Human Oversoul, and each one of these is also connected more or less inseparably with all the others; “all is everywhere and always” (*Gītā*, XI, 40 ; XVIII, 40) [Thus, even in the strictest and most chaste monogamy the two spouses do not wholly and exclusively own each other; *portions* or *aspects* of them are owned by parents, brothers, sisters, especially children, friends, etc. And even in *free love* or *promiscuity* there is exclusive association between the spouses for short or long terms. Draupadī was the wife of the five Pāndavas for one year each, exclusively, and bore one son to each]; but only one set of forms, corresponding with each other, of the different yet connected aspects or departments of life, is manifested in any given time, place, and community. When the collective mass-mind (the particular Sūtrātmā of smaller or larger scale) of that community becomes surfeited with the experiences (or excesses) of that set of forms, and begins to take more pain than pleasure in them, then, after the inevitable struggle between its old desires and ways and the new, (which struggle manifests as a conflict between the conservatives and the radicals of that community), it makes a change, throws what was so far manifest into dormancy, and brings out into patency another set of forms which was up to now latent — comparatively.

One set of communist thinkers in Russia, and elsewhere, seem to have become disgusted with what they regard as the monotony of the too constant association, on the one hand, and, on the [Page 11] other, as the narrowing, selfish, clannish emotions, of the family-life as prevalent today, and its incidents of private, exclusive, heritable and iniquitously distributed property; and they want wider, larger, more extensive emotions, which are, according to them, the concomitants of only freedom in sex-relations and in property.

With constancy of contact passion dims and love fades into indifference, dislike, or devotion. The exhilaration which we have called romance is irretrievably lost. The disappearance of bourgeois monogamy will remove these family restrictions, and open up the possibilities for the growth of the social emotions in a more communal life. Men and women will have

affections that will become expansive and not ingrown. Sorrows will not be limited to a small group, nor pleasures shared in clannish form. Social sympathy will supersede family avarice. [Calverton, *The Bankruptcy of Marriage*, pp 280-282; pub 1929]

And they are therefore proposing, side by side with the abolition of private property, what seems, in effect, to be a reversion, on a more intelligent and higher level, in a regulated form, to the free unions of some primitive human tribes, or of the so-called higher animals, or, better, of the gods and nymphs, the singing and dancing *Gandharvas* and *apsaras* in *Svarga* (heaven). Be it noted that this is said without any sarcasm, or prejudiced implication of condemnation; for animals, and primitive or non-primitive men, and gods and goddesses, all are equally manifestations of the Supreme; “God fulfils himself in many ways”, in forms of man [Page 12] and beast, angel and evil sprite; and we must all learn “to live and let live”. But just to ensure this last, of letting live mutually, and in so far as pros and cons have to be discussed before a course of action can be settled on among persons who are to live and work together, it may be suggested that the significance of the following Purānic story should be duly considered. The denizens of heaven have been *cursed* by Pārvatī, the consort of Shiva, (though some extremists in birth-control might well say *blessed*) with complete sterility, and deprivation of the “love of children” (which however might be regarded by some as amply compensated for by freedom from responsibility and *worry*); and the *Kalpa-taru*, the *Wishing-Tree* (of Imagination), which stands in the middle of the Public Pleasure-Park of *Svarga*, called *Nandana* (the Joyful Paradise — of mind), gives, to each of them, all the bliss-dreams they desire, only so long as his or her bank-account of *punya* (merit) lasts; and that when the credit is exhausted, he or she is flung down ruthlessly from heaven into this lower world again to earn *merit* -cash anew. This story seems to be not without meaning, and a meaning not altogether useless for or inapplicable to mundane human affairs.

In any and every case, the metaphysical axiom holds true that error lies in the extremes, and truth and right in the mean (*Gītā*, VI, 16-17). In trying to avoid the jaws of Scylla we must not rush [Page 13] into the maw of Charybdis. If excessive individualism or familism is the devil, excessive socialism or communism is the deep sea. We want “I” and *We* both. We cannot understand, we cannot feel either without the other. If we try to abolish either, we will abolish the other too. If we cut away the individual-tree-groups, we will not have any communal-wood left.

What is needed is a rational *humanism* which will carefully avoid excesses on either side, will make a balance between, and so will reconcile and synthesize, the individualist and the communist aspects of life, both equally indispensable. And we have always to remember that no scheme can abolish evil and pain altogether, that the best scheme is that which minimizes these in any given set of circumstances, and that this minimisation is possible only when the facts and the laws of the psychology and the physiology of individuals and groups is duly taken into account. The exhilaration of short-lived passionate romance, very valuable experience though it be, is yet not to be regarded as an end in itself, but has a means of kindling permanent steady spiritual affection and devotion, towards the members of the family, thence towards kith and kin, thence towards fellow-beings, generally, and finally towards the Self in all. The relationship of *Purusha* and *Prakṛti*, of husband and wife, includes all relationships, of spouse and spouse, brother and sister, father and daughter [Page 14] mother and son, friend and friend, of equal and at the same time younger as well as elder. Husband and wife are all these to each other, as is expressly declared by Dasharatha with reference to Kausalyā, [*Rāmāyana*, *Āraṇya-Kāṇḍa*, ch 12] and by Shakuntalā to Dushyanta. [*Mbh*, *Ādi-parva*, ch 98]

All these relationships obviously spring out of, and are therefore always included in the primal relationship of man and woman, which finds its fulfilment, its complete manifestation, only in and through all these, only when all these are duly and fully developed. It is only the abiding spiritual affections belonging to these which can make it possible that “joy becomes duty and love becomes law”. They who wish to avoid these, and to taste only the passions and sensations and exhilarations of *romance*, seem to be like persons who wish to live wholly on spices and wines, without any really nourishing substantial food at all. They will, in all probability, fall very ill, psychically or physically or both, and very soon — so psychology and physiology seem to indicate. The family, and not the individual, is the unit of the community. [*Manu*, ix, 45]

The community grows out of the family, is an expansion of the family, as a forest is of groups of different kinds of trees, and is meaningless without it. Communal life, social emotions, social pleasures and sorrows and sympathies, are only copies and [Page 15] dilutions of those of the family, and are as difficult to feel without having first felt the latter, as it is to understand the rule of three without having mastered the mysteries of addition and subtraction. To belittle, to weaken, to destroy the family is to lay the axe at the root of the community also. If “famili-arity breeds contempt” in those who do not know how to avoid excess, “commun-ality will breed disgust” in them even more quickly. But even poisons have at times a medicinal value. Dirt has been defined as matter in the wrong place. In the right place, it is manure, food for cereals. Manu, the Father of the Human Family, foreseeing the possibilities and the consequences of overpopulation, knowing human weaknesses, tender towards them, lovingly wishful to indulge, but more wishful to guard against the painful results of over-indulgence, gently ordains that the first child is the child of *dharma*-virtue; the subsequent children, of *kāma*-lust.

१ यस्मिन्नृणं संनयति येन चानन्यमश्नुते ।

स एव धर्मजः पुत्रः कामजानितरान् विदुः ॥ ix, 107.

Herein is the indication that, if contraceptives are to be used at all, they must be used strictly within the limits of matrimony. His injunction for premarital virginity, and marital chastity, for both sexes, is unqualified. [Manu lends us countenance to the so-called *double standard*, one for man, another for woman; though, in special circumstances, especially for the soldier-class, he seems to permit polygyna by regular marriage] [Page 16] Marriage should be a joy, but it is also a discipline; and it becomes a joy only when it is entered into in the reverent spirit of self-discipline and self-sacrifice for the new generation.

It is quite likely that the revels of the West are the reaction from, and the rewards of, and are therefore exhausting the spiritual forces stored up by, the ascetic self-denial of the emigrant Puritan ancestors. Yet it is these forces which have probably built up the greatness of the U. S. A. Thus did Rāvana's excessive self-indulgence exhaust his *tapas*-merit, and destroy him and his empire.

Not equality, which means perpetual odious comparison and thence conflict, but “identity of man and woman and child”, the visible *Tri-mūrti*, Father — Holy Ghost — Son, as of head, heart, and limbs — this is the basis of the happy and prosperous and stable community. So says Manu (IX, 45); and so says Jesus Christ, “The twain shall be one”. Therefore has the Indian heart always revered the Mother, *Vande Mātaram*; not man or woman as man or woman, but the woman as Mother, the preserver of life, the embodiment of Nature's noblest, tenderest, sublimest, most selfless aspect.

Therefore have all the great Teachers done homage to it unanimously. Krishna can find no higher words than the terms of the Family by which to describe the Supreme: "I am the Father, the Mother, the Spouse, the Friend, the [Page 17] Home and Refuge". Jesus says "Honor thy father and mother (and teacher) and love thy (spouse and child and) neighbor as thy-Self. Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt commit no adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt (not amass riches for thy self, but also) give to the poor". The Buddha says almost *exactly* the same in the *Mahāṃangala Sutta* and the *Pañcha-shīla*. The *Purānas* and the *Yoga-sūtras* (II, 30) repeat the very words. And Manu, first and foremost of them all, enjoins the very *same*. [X 63; II, 226-232, IV, 182-185] Muhammad the Prophet says: "Heaven spreads out beneath the feet of mothers".

Respect for the relationships of the family, and for its righteous (and not excessive) belongings and possessions, has thus, in general terms, always formed the backbone, the skeletal system, of all codes of morals, though the details, the coverings of flesh and blood and other tissues, have differed in various ways. This is inevitable, since they are psycho-physically connected with the development of the individual consciousness and sex-difference and the three main physical and the three main psychical *eshanās* or appetites, [See *The Science of the Emotions*, Ch. III (B)] ambitious impulses, instincts, or interests.

So long and so far as human beings have the sense of separate individuality, so long and so far they will suffer, and will fear, pain and death. And [Page 18] so long and so far as they suffer and fear pain and death, they must and will have the regulations and the consolations of Law, Morals, Religion, Philosophy, in crude or refined form, according to their stage of evolution. The higher the Evolution, the finer the notions of the relations between proprietor and property, between human being and human being, between man and woman and child, between man and God — until man becomes God, God-in-Man and Man-in-God, *jīvātmā* becomes *Paramātmā*. They who try to flout these altogether, seem to be courting very grave peril. Safety and progress are to be found, by the consensus of all the greatest teachers and lovers of mankind, in promoting the science and art of Eugenics diligently, no doubt, but always under the guidance of well-worn and time-honored Ethics, and always testing Ethics by the principles of Metaphysics, the Eternal Science of the Eternal Self.