

ALTRUISM OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE

In the previous studies we saw how a right contact with H.P.B.'s writings develops the intuitive faculty and also unfolds that mental perception which enables us to see universal principles hidden in, and underlying a myriad particulars. *The Secret Doctrine* teaches its students to make the right use of their hearts as well as their heads. The purification and illumination of both heart and mind result from the correct study of the book, but not until a third factor also is brought into play.

We have already emphasized in the very first study of this series how we should take H.P.B.'s message as a whole without discarding any of her writings. Similarly the message of *The Secret Doctrine* can only be received by a threefold exercise which brings into play the energies of the whole man.

By the lower analytical and reasoning mind the hundred facts and the thousand details of the book can be understood; but it is the higher synthetic mind only which can have the understanding of the universals. Even that higher mind does not succeed in its task if it is unaided by the apperception of the intuition, which is the energy of the Heart. Even this heart faculty has to be further energized into Action, and then only the contents of *The Secret Doctrine* in all their glory stand revealed. With the forces of intuition in operation our *kamic* nature gets purified as well as transformed. Passion becomes love—that higher love which is devotion, true *bhakti*, free from sentimentality. Just as love is different from infatuation, so is devotion distinct from religious fervour. The range of this lower type of devotion is somewhat wide. The religious ritualist, the *pujari*, the image-maker and image-worshiper superior to the mere idol-worshiper, have planted themselves on this path and flower as the Lovers of the Self, which is themselves. Freeing themselves from the trammels of Karma, seeking Peace, they go to the sleep of peace, to awake at daybreak, and suffer the disturbances of the day. The message of H.P.B. warns us against the insidious temptations of this path. The history of occultism is very full of instances of the lofty failures on the Path of the Spirit caused by the development of higher understanding, and of the intuition which saw the universals, but in the attainment of this the world of humanity was left behind. Understanding by the higher mind and apperception by intuition are not sufficient *unless these produce the action which is altruism*.

The lower four-fold man, the quarternary, has to become triune, and The Secret Doctrine, which is a book of practical occultism, helps us to achieve this task. The higher triad has to be transformed into the Sacred Tetractys—that is the goal taught in the message of H.P.B. The single energy of altruism unifies all actions which are undertaken in terms of the understanding of the universals and executed in terms of the intuitive apperception of the Heart.

“Great intellect and too much knowledge are a two-edged weapon in life, and instruments for evil as well as for good.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, II, 163). In the Spirit-Life the same can be said of the Heart-quality of Devotion. Heart can and does save mind, but it, in its turn, has to be saved. From the ashes of its own dead past arises the Phoenix-soul—the bird of life, and instead of desiring the life of passion, wherein it struggled and learnt, it now thirsts for the Life of Peace and Rest, of Emancipation or *Mukti*. Still it remains the child of *Kama*, still it is the first-born of Eros. This higher passion, this spiritual *tanha*, this *mumuksha*, this desire for liberation is the supreme test of the

Devotee, the *Bhakta*, who has seen the transitoriness of desire-built forms of life, but who has yet to see the littleness of the life of Desire-built Forms of *Mukti* or Salvation. The desire for life in form has given place to desire for life without form; the dreamer wants now to sleep dreamlessly, in the Bliss of Introspection, while millions suffer the woes of existence.

The Secret Doctrine drives home this stupendous lesson. The *Stanzas of Dzyan* and the golden precepts of the *Voice of the Silence* belong to the same series of Occult Instructions, and if they emphasize one teaching more than any other it is the dangers of a life of knowledge and devotion, of wisdom and purity which is at the same time devoid of *positive and active altruism*.

Without hesitation it can be asserted that the teachings contained in *The Secret Doctrine* will not be thoroughly understood by one who is not actively altruistic. It will remain a sealed book in spite of higher understanding and intuitive perceptions, unless these two are made use of on the plane of action. What distinguishes a Theosophist from a student of Theosophy is this altruism. In *The Key to Theosophy* it is said, "Theosophist is, who Theosophy does,"—not thinks, not studies, not feels, but *does*. Speaking of the pledged member of her esoteric school, H.P.B. said that he "has to become a thorough altruist." (*Key*, p. 20.) Her writings are full to the brim of this teaching concerning altruism, and it is unnecessary here to quote her further on the subject. "...the only palliative to the evils of life is union and harmony—a Brotherhood IN ACTU, and *altruism* not simply in name." (*S.D.*, I, 644.) Let it be clearly understood, however, that this altruism must be founded on the rock of knowledge of the universals, and devotion to the Law of which they are the manifested aspects. If there is danger in head learning, if there are risks involved in the lower devotion to which reference has been made, so also there is a peculiar glamour which the life of charity and service throws on the Soul. Altruism engendered by the lower mind and energized by the lower devotion is not true altruism. Activities of the lower mind vitalize our passional nature—not always and necessarily evil—and they impel us to actions which under the impacts of civilization very often become philanthropic and altruistic. The mind free from attacks of kama is energized by the compassionate reason or Buddhi, and thus wedded is ensouled by the Self of Creative-Power, which is the true doer of deeds. Then comes into manifestation the higher altruism in which charity is just and not merely kind, altruism which enables man to discard the crutch of dependence and to stand on his own feet in self-trust. From this it will be seen how all three powers of the Spirit must work conjointly if spirit-life is to prevail.

To explore the Sacred Land of *The Secret Doctrine* we must arm ourselves with the weapons of altruism, intuition, and perception of universals. He in whom these three do not exist will not likely be attracted to this adventure, but should he take up the book, he will not be energized and ensouled by it, though it might charm and entice his mind. Those who have these faculties in some measure and are desirous of exercising them, or those who are earnestly wishful of unfolding them are welcome to take part in this expedition, and such can be promised a rich reward.

In our first article we remarked on the method for study advised by H.P.B. in her "Mistaken Notions on the 'Secret Doctrine'". In the subsequent studies we have arrived at the bases required. If we decide to acquire the knowledge about universals, which is the one sure way to free our mind from the hooks of kamic particulars, we are bound to

touch the plane of intuition in due season, and then naturally our Creative Will will work altruistically. But we must not wait for compassion to express altruism and only ponder over the cosmic ultimates, determined to see the one in the many; while thus occupied we must devote time in paying attention to *The Voice of the Silence* and making use of *The Key to Theosophy*, so as to help the awakening intuition and the awakening altruism.

Thus equipped we are ready to attack the book, and under our scheme, naturally, the very first thing to grapple with is the Three Fundamental Propositions which the SECRET DOCTRINE has established and of which *The Secret Doctrine* treats. They are axioms, and need not be taken as postulates. They are self-evident Truths—Truths evident to the Self. The Universal Self through its apperception knows, realizes, nay, *is* these Truths. We human beings see them but partially and our growth is but the growth in realization of these three Truths. Let it be clearly understood that in reference to them there is no order of importance, or of sequence, or even of understanding. In just that proportion that we understand one we understand the other two. These Fundamental Propositions constitute the original, archetypal Ideal Triangle, with three equal sides—Immortal Spirit, Indestructible Matter, Ever-conserved Energy; with three equal angles of Ideation, Form, Motion. They also may be viewed as the Circle, the Sphere, the Plenum, which result from the Point and are made up of points. As space and as location, great or small; as duration and as time, long or short; everywhere is the One Unmanifested and its triple manifestation; all the while is the One Impartite Triune Nature becoming endless trinities. Therefore *Devi Bhagavat* says: “Grains of sand are numerable, but of universes there is no counting”; and in one of the less known Upanishads it is said:

All around this Brahmanda (Egg of Brahma, *i.e.*, a solar system) there blaze infinite millions of Brahmandas; each has its own shell (or envelope; each self with its sphere) four-faced, five-faced, successively up to a thousand-faced portions of Narayana, in whom Rajoguna is predominant, each the unfold of one world-system, each its presiding deity. Aspects of Narayana, called Vishnu and Maheshvara, in whom Sattva and Tamo gunas predominate, also are there, performing the work of preservation and destruction, of sustaining and regenerating. These Brahmandas swim like shoals of fishes in the Ocean of Existence; these Brahmandas blow up and burst like bubbles on the Face of the Deep that ever is.

It is said above that those propositions are axioms, but they are not self-evident to all, any more than the axiom that a line is length without breadth is evident to all beginners of the study of Euclid. As in any other science or philosophy, the student of Theosophy has to learn these Three Fundamental Propositions and if his capacities fail to reveal their axiomatic nature, he must begin by postulating them. It does not mean that he who postulates will never see for himself the axiomatic nature of these propositions, any more than the boy who postulates that point has position but no magnitude, remains blind to the axiom.

Let us throw for a moment a cursory glance on these propositions treated of on pp. 14 to 18 of Vol. I, so that we may relate them to what has been said above. “The impersonal reality pervading the Kosmos” (pp. 14-15) is the Universal Parent of all particular personalities. Each one of us is rooted in It. Here is a proposition to be reflected upon till it fecundates the mind, and the mind conceives the reality it holds within itself. Forgetfulness and memory of this Reality alternate in us, producing “the Eternity of the

Pilgrim” which is “like a wink of the Eye of Self-Existence” (pp. 16-17) which Eye is not of a Being, nor is it a thing, but in itself is a condition, state or plane which is the Impersonal Reality. Thus arise our waking and sleep, our day and night, our life and death, our involution and evolution, the “tidal ebb of flux and reflux” (p. 17). Here is the second proposition to be contemplated and seen by the eye of the heart which is intuition—the mystery of the diastole and the systole of the spiritual heart, which in expanding remembers and in contracting forgets the Truth of truths—its own impersonal ever-existing state. This forgetfulness is left behind, the robe of memory is donned when that heart, through “self-induced and self-devised efforts” (p. 17) acts altruistically for the whole of which it is but a part. Altruism is the result of sure memory of the truth of “the fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul” (p. 17). Here is the third proposition to be cognized by and through action—”through personal effort and merit” (p. 17)—through the labour of love, through drudgery made divine.

To perceive the interrelation and interdependence of man and nature; to correlate the correspondence subsisting between universals and particulars; to cognize our minds as the playground of the energies of the Spirit and of the shadows cast by the movements of Matter; to practice the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood—all these are the descriptions of one and the same process, in different tongues, of metaphysics or of ethics. The same identical truth is expressed in the two following quotations—the first is metaphysical, the second an ethical presentation.

He who would be an occultist must not separate either himself or anything else from the rest of creation or *non-creation*. For, the moment he distinguishes himself from even a vessel of dishonour, he will not be able to join himself to any vessel of honour. He must think of himself as an infinitesimal something, not even as an individual atom, but as a part of the world-atoms as a whole, or become an illusion, a nobody, and vanish like a breath leaving no trace behind. As illusions, we are separate distinct bodies, living in masks furnished by Maya. Can we claim one single atom in our body as distinctly our own? Everything, from spirit to the tiniest particle, is part of the whole, at best a link. Break a single link and all passes into annihilation; but this is impossible. (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, p. 138.)

He who does not practice altruism; he who is not prepared to share his last morsel with a weaker or poorer than himself; he who neglects to help his brother man, of whatever race, nation, or creed, whenever and wherever he meets suffering, and who turns a deaf ear to the cry of human misery; he who hears an innocent person slandered, whether a brother Theosophist or not, and does not undertake his defence as he would undertake his own—is no Theosophist. (*Lucifer*, Vol. I, p. 169.)

The advice and instruction so often given that helpfulness ought to be a matter of habit with all students of the Wisdom and all aspirants to spirituality, is rooted in this fact of unity which exists in the whole of Nature. The action aspect of Spirit manifests as the power to unite inherent in chemical elements or in human hearts. “The river mingles with the ocean,” “the mountains kiss high heaven,” “the sunlight clasps the earth, and the moonbeams kiss the sea,” and

Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine

In one another's being mingle.

This Brotherhood in Nature is felt by poets and mystics however dimly, as for instance, by Shelley:—

Earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;

.....

If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!

While the poet mystically feels this the Sage of Occult Wisdom perceives the fact and the student of *The Secret Doctrine* is made to learn it. The Three Fundamental Propositions to be known by altruism, intuition and the perception of the Universals are presented thus in the *Gita*:

I will now tell thee what is the object of wisdom, from knowing which a man enjoys immortality; it is that which has no beginning, even the supreme Brahma, and of which it cannot be said that it is either Being or Non-Being. It has hands and feet in all directions; eyes, heads, mouths, and ears in every direction; it is immanent in the world, possessing the vast whole. Itself without organs, it is reflected by all the senses and faculties; unattached, yet supporting all; without qualities, yet the witness of them all. It is within and without all creatures animate and inanimate; it is inconceivable because of its subtlety, and although near it is afar off.

As a single sun illuminateth the whole world, even so doth the One Spirit illumine every body, O son of Bharata.

These which follow are from the Upanishads:

It shines and therefore doth everything shine; by That Light all This shines forth. (*Katha*, V. 15.)

The Light which is behind all, which shines behind this high heaven, which shines behind everything in the highest world beyond which there are no other worlds—that same Light is within man. (*Chhandogya*, III. 13. 7.)

Behold the Truth—as from a blazing Fire arise a thousand sparks, so from the Imperishable, manifold beings awake; and O friend, therein they return to sleep. (*Mundaka*, II. i. 1.)

The Light within man is that of the Spark from the Eternal Fire which always blazes forth, and to which the ancient Iranians and their modern descendants the Parsis pay homage and reverentially invoke thus:

Mayest Thou burn bright in this home! Mayest Thou ever blaze forth therein!
Mayest Thou grow and increase in this home, even unto the distant Day when
Restoration of Power takes place in the World, till the time of the good, powerful
Renovation of the World. (*Atash-Nyaish*.)

Numerous quotations can be made but let us give the Source of these all “in the mysterious language of the old Stanza,” in which the Three Fundamental Propositions are

taught in terms of the Universals and the Particulars, to be reflected upon till by Intuition we perceive them, and by Altruism we break the illusion of “Thy Soul and My Soul.”
(*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 120.)

“Lift thy head, oh Lanoo; dost thou see one, or countless lights above thee, burning in the dark midnight sky?”

“I sense one Flame, oh Gurudeva, I see countless undetached sparks shining in it.”

“Thou sayest well. And now look around and into thyself. That light which burns inside thee, dost thou feel it different in anywise from the light that shines in thy Brother-men?”

“It is in no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its outer garments delude the ignorant into saying, ‘Thy Soul and My Soul.’”

B.P. WADIA
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