

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HEART & ITS PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The heart is symbolical in this context. Just as the heart is central to the functioning of the body in a literal sense, it is central to one's spiritual life in a figurative sense. The *'Doctrine of the Heart'* is a very serious subject and merits the attention of every deep & serious student of Theosophy. One may look at the sequence of the objects. Universal brotherhood is placed before a comparative study. Notwithstanding all the literature in the epistemologies of the world, soul-wisdom is considered superior to head-learning. Our attention is drawn by Mme. H.P. Blavatsky to the *'Doctrine of the Heart'* in her little gem, *'The Voice of the Silence'*. It is with a feeling of eternal gratitude & humility that the true *chela* [disciple] should approach this work.

H.P.B. says in her work...

"Search for the Paths. But, O Lanoo, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting. Learn above all to separate Head-learning from Soul-Wisdom, the "Eye" from the "Heart" doctrine."

There is a demand made of the chela even before he starts his journey. He is required to have a clean heart. Patanjali outlines both *'Yama'* & *'Niyama'* as prerequisites on the eightfold path of *Yoga*. Again, there is the great qualification of *Viveka* or discrimination mentioned. Here the chela is asked to separate, or discriminate, Head-learning from Soul-Wisdom, the "Eye" from the "Heart" doctrine.

It is now for the earnest seeker to investigate the difference and make his considered choice. To rush into anything without a proper understanding would be presumptive; to shrink away or withdraw from making a choice would amount to falling backwards.

A deeper understanding of the two doctrines would be required here. H.P.B. gives a brief explanation...

"The two schools of Buddha's doctrine, the esoteric and the exoteric, are respectively called the "Heart" and the "Eye" Doctrine. Bodhidharma called them in China -- from whence the names reached Tibet -- the Tsung-men (esoteric) and Kiau-men (exoteric school). It is so named, because it is the teaching which emanated from Gautama Buddha's heart, whereas the "Eye" Doctrine was the work of his head or brain. The "Heart Doctrine" is also called "the seal of truth" or the "true seal," a symbol found on the heading of almost all esoteric works."

To understand the difference from the philosophical and the practical viewpoints and live life accordingly requires true intelligence and not just an

intellectual understanding. Our understanding on the emblematical spiral stairway offers a higher and more holistic perspective with every move upwards. This upward journey does not exclude the earlier understanding but only helps enrich it. This perspective automatically enhances the responsibility of the ascending pilgrim and consequently, the effects generated from every cause created by the chela as he moves from choice to choice in his arduous journey.

Many are the opportunities afforded by The Theosophical Society to its earnest members to understand and practise the 'Doctrine of the Heart'. It is up to each member to choose his path and grasp firmly to the ideals before him. Its allied organisations encourage members to practise the five *yagnas* which broadly outline each human being's *dharma*. These *yagnas* are...

- Brahma Yagna* – This implies oblations to Brahma through study, meditation & teaching
- Deva Yagna* - This implies oblations to all the beneficent forces in nature & the universe
- Pitri Yagna* - This implies oblations to our ancestors, who have given an opportunity to incarnate in this world.
- Nri Yagna* - This implies duties to our fellow human beings whose necessities we are expected to relieve by providing food, clothing & shelter.
- Bhuta Yagna* - This implies duties to animals and other sentient beings by being kind to them and protecting them

A larger measure of service would be to feed the soul. The 'soul-sick' are many and the moral & spiritual sufferings of the world demand our attention as much as its external suffering. The Master writes, "The true theosophist is a philanthropist-'not for himself, but for the world he lives'." When the heart is opened to the suffering of the world, there is no stopping the true theosophist.

We need to clarify our motives when we perform any action. Herein comes the real difference between the two doctrines – that of the 'eye' & that of the 'heart'. Those who choose the exoteric path will do acts of goodness, but will choose the doctrine of the eye. Those who pursue the esoteric doctrine will choose the doctrine of the heart. This indeed is the path of the Bodhisattva.

H.P.B. writes...

"The Dharma of the "Eye" is the embodiment of the external, and the non-existing.

The Dharma of the "Heart" is the embodiment of Bodhi,* the Permanent and Everlasting. [*True, divine Wisdom.]

Know, O beginner, this is the *Open* PATH, the way to selfish bliss, shunned by the Boddhisattvas of the "Secret Heart," the Buddhas of Compassion."

The search for *Moksha* or *Nirvana*, through the different *Yogas* may seem like a personal search, a personal attainment & a personal experience. This can never be so. In the great letter of 1881, a very high Adept said...

“For our doctrines to practically react on the so-called moral code, or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc., we have to popularize a knowledge of theosophy. It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvana (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*—but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause as many of our fellow-creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true theosophist.”

This in short summarises the practical and final implication of the ‘Doctrine of the Heart’. We need to wake up to it everyday. We need to be mindful about it every moment of our life. We need to be living examples to others. Having said this, there needs to be great humility. This humility has to complement the great knowledge and courage that signifies an enlightened one.

We are in the *Kali Yuga*. The need is to be ever watchful and vigilant. The worldly forces around us weave an illusion that draws us away like a victim of a whirlpool. The watchfulness is not only of our actions, but of the motives behind these actions. Clarifying our motives at every stage becomes a task of paramount importance.

Patanjali speaks of the last three stages of Yoga. These are *Dharana* [concentration], *Dhyana* [meditation] & finally *Samadhi* [trance]. Together these are called *Samyama*. These three form the *Antaranga* or the inner part of the eightfold system of Yoga. The practice of *Samyama* is the practice of *Raja Yoga* or occultism. It leads to *Dharma-Megha-Samadhi*. It is beyond the mind. It is beyond the confines of time & space. To look at this attainment as a personal pursuit is a gross misunderstanding. The only true path is the path of compassion. The Bodhisattva will not finally enter the gates of Nirvana until the last sentient being has. This is the ultimate vow that marks the pinnacle of the journey outlined in the ‘Doctrine of the Heart’- *the ‘Vow of the Bodhisattva’*.

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