

LOVE - DIVINE, PSYCHIC AND VITAL

In all Yoga, Love is an essential part of the Sadhana, though it may occupy a subordinate place in the personal consciousness in the Yogas of Action and Knowledge. In these cases it may be simply a Spiritual Love for the Self or Atman or for the Master of works, but without a Love or Devotion in the same form there could not be the transcendence of ego or a sufficient motive to seek Yoga. But while Love in some form is always essential, it does not always occupy the premier position in the Sadhana. However, in Bhakti Yoga Love and Devotion may be said to be the very essence of the Sadhana, and, since in the present effort in this Yoga of Surrender the emphasis is upon Bhakti, Love comes to occupy a place of first importance. As a result a clear understanding of Love and Devotion is essential so that there may be an intelligent discrimination between that Love which is the prime aid for the Sadhaka and those other forms which may lead to deviations and cul-de-sacs of various sorts.

Three and possibly four kinds of Love may be distinguished with many forms of interfusions and combinations which may produce a distinctly complex picture. It is because of this complexity that Sri Aurobindo has said that while the Yoga of Devotion is especially powerful, yet it needs the guidance of Knowledge. For this reason we shall proceed to a consideration of the various forms and seek to isolate their characteristic features.

1. Divine Love. In its master form, Divine Love is impersonal. It radiates upon all, the just and the unjust, as does the Light of the sun. To be sure, the benefit from It is not equally received by all, but this is due to the difference in receptivity of the objects, not to a discrimination at the source of Love. He who ardently loves the Divine will be most open to this impersonal Love.

But, inasmuch as the Divine is both Personal and Impersonal, there is likewise a personal Divine Love which is bestowed upon the individual as an individual. The Divinity may be realized as something very intimate and Who also has a very loving care for the individual Sadhaka. This Love persists whether the object is a sinner or one who walks in the paths of righteousness. It is the Love which is independent that leads the shepherd to put forth all effort necessary to find the one hundredth, or the lost sheep. It is not a Love which is dependent upon a return by the object upon which It is bestowed. It cannot be transformed into something other than Love. For the good of Its object It will accept crucifixion. It is the Love of the Avatar.

2. Spiritual Love. We may think of Spiritual Love as Love directed toward the Divine as unseen or as the Self or Atman. This is a love of the aspirant or the Sadhaka. This is an entirely selfless Love, and is quite devoid of a seeking for some compensation. Love of this kind is without any element of ego or vital love.

3. Psychic Love. The Psychic Love is the love of the Secret Heart or of the Soul. This love is akin to the Divine Love and to the Spiritual Love. The Psychic Being is the immortal part of us which, at the same time, is in the evolution and grows with the experiences of the series of incarnations and persists in the ~~intermittent~~ intervals between lives. It is the true personality of every one of us. The Psychic Being guides our evolution as well as It can from Its hidden place in the Secret Heart, but until It has come to the front and occupies the dominant place, It can act only indirectly through the mind, life and body. Since the mind, life and body are in greater or less degree self-moving or self determining in the ordinary human being, the Psychic action is much distorted and crippled by admixtures from these three principles of the nature. The result is that Psychic manifestations in

one who is not advanced in Sadhana are generally mixed and thus far from pure. Yet the noblest and most generous impulses manifested by man are due to the influence of the Psychic Being. The first purpose in the Sadhana of Surrender is the giving over of all direction and government of the tri-une nature to the Psychic Being. Surrender means first the subordination of the body, life and even mind to the soul so that they become completely plastic in Its hands. As a result of all this the Psychic Love is of most immediate importance to us in the present Sadhana.

The primary characteristic of Psychic Love is Its strong and persistent directedness to the Divine, both personal and impersonal, and both unseen and embodied. It can and does manifest as a Love for another human being, but It is oriented to the Soul or Divine reality of the human being. In Its purity It is not affected by the features, either in their presence or absence, that play such a determinant part in vital love. It is a self-giving Love which, while It appreciates a response or return, is not conditioned by these. It does not cease because of negative qualities in the object, nor does It ever change into indifference, anger or hatred. Like Divine Love It is radiant and not self-seeking. The Psychic Love is intimately associated with Delight and a strong sense for Beauty, but the Delight is not dependent upon external circumstances and the Beauty is a radiance. There is a strong sense of something precious and beatific. It tends to interfuse all with a bath of Purity. In Its Presence the ego tends to subside.

While it is true that the Psychic Love does from time to time manifest between one human and another, yet, so long as the nature has not been purified or not sufficiently purified by Sadhana, it is always mixed with inferior elements of the nature, particularly the vital love. For this reason, in the present Sadhana the orientation of the love of

the Sadhaka should be to the Divine, either seen or unseen or both, until such time as the Psychic Being is well established as leader of the nature. Once this point is achieved, new horizons in human relationship open which will have, even in this world, something of the quality which is native to the heavenly domains.

There are those who have imagined that the Divine, Spiritual or Psychic Love is cold in contrast with vital love, but this is a radical mistake. Love, of whatever kind, is never cold. It may be quite other-worldly and it may be quite without organic thrill, but this does not mean that it is defective in intensity and real ^{warm} warmth. Often the coarser parts of the nature do not participate in these higher forms of Love, but this is due to the fact that these parts are too dense and too earthy to respond to forces of such high purity. When transformation has proceeded sufficiently far and these coarser parts are no longer coarse and animalistic, then they too may participate in the action of the higher Love, but the preparation will require a protracted purification and katharsis. As a matter of fact, the higher form of Love is capable of much greater intensity and warmth than anything that is possible to a mere vital love.

4. Vital love. That which most men, including artists and writers, think of in connection with the subject of love is exclusively vital love. This is the love which is usually interfused with lust and sexuality, though this is not always the case. There is such a thing as a pure, lustless and selfless vital love, but this manifestation is the exception rather than the rule. Often there is a mixture of noble with ignoble elements, a degree of light alternating with or united with darkness. This is the biological love par excellence. It is designed to serve an office of nature and, when that office has been served, it tends to disappear or be transformed into indifference.

and, sometimes, even into hatred. Everyone has read of, if he has not himself experienced or witnessed, the love-hate emotional complex. Some writers enjoy wallowing in this sort of thing. But this sort of love is not at all admirable; in fact, it is often quite ugly. The Sadhaka of the present Sadhana should avoid fiction or drama dealing with this kind of subject so long as he has not established the Psychic Being in the commanding position. However, understanding this side of the emotive nature is important and so serious study of professional works on the subject may have its place, but for you Sadhakas, not now. Such information as may be necessary will be given in instructions like the present or by means of the letters of Sri Aurobindo which deal with the same subject matter.

It is the nature of vital love to be exclusive, possessive and monopolistic. It is dependent upon a specific object at a specific time. While it is capable of self-giving it yet expects a return and almost always languishes if the return is not ultimately forthcoming. It can easily turn to anger and is easily hurt when it feels, justifiably or not, that it has been neglected. It may demand more than it gives, though with some natures the vital love is dominantly self-giving. When disappointed it is subject to depression even to an extent that has led to suicide. It loves the drama of light and shade, a mixture of alternate pleasure and suffering. To both the mental nature and the spiritual consciousness this sort of thing is repugnant. If an individual finds that he is attracted by the dramatic play of opposites then he can know that at such times the vital nature in him has the lead. To the spiritual consciousness it is an unceasing Ananda that is attractive, for here the variation is not between light and darkness but between differences of quality and a lesser or greater Light, but never any darkness.

More often than not, vital love is mixed with lust and sexuality, since its primary office in the untransformed nature in the Ignorance is the continuation of the species. Difference of sex is of primary though not invariable, importance in vital love. Here the contrast with the higher forms of Love is most marked. For the Divine Love or the Love from the Divine, difference of sex is irrelevant; this difference is no more than different vestures of the Soul. Likewise, for Spiritual Love, sex does not enter into the picture at all, save that sexual love tends to be quite depressed or excluded. For the Psychic Love the difference of sex has simply the effect of a difference in coloring, but there is no reason why it should not be just as strong between persons of the same sex as between those of opposite sex. But when lust enters into the picture these higher forms of love tend to weaken and vanish.

The reasons why the Sadhaka should avoid lust and sexuality should now be clear. Yet the problem is not so simple as mere repression. Transformation is the key. But meanwhile every sex and lust-exciting circumstance should be avoided as far as possible. Indeed, at some stage, retirement to a favorable retreat for the critical part of the transformation may be necessary. Yet, with all this care, there still remains the fact that at certain stages in the emergence of the Psychic Love there can be, and almost certainly will be, a mixture of the Psychic with the vital, and the latter is nearly always interfused with sexual in the beginning. There thus can be excitation of the sexual nature. The Sadhaka should not view this with alarm, a sense of guilt or ^{of self-}condemnation. This is a time to make a special effort of surrender to the Divine of all these elements, and then feel confident that the Divine will effect the transformation of the nature. But at such times especially be careful not to let yourself fall in love with

someone of the opposite sex (or someone of your own sex if you happen to have the homo-sexual psychology) either a co-disciple or someone outside of the group. Seek help from the Mother and the Guru.

In the case of Chelas who are house-holders, i.e. married, the domestic obligation is ~~realized~~ recognized and the sex-relationship is not interdicted, unless both partners freely agree to the step. But the rule remains that lustful thought and feeling should be banished as far as possible. The rule is to surrender to the Divine the thought and the feeling when it arises.

Before we leave this phase of the subject of vital love some attention should be given to the practices which are designed to arouse a vital and therefore sexual interest. To be beautiful or handsome or otherwise attractive is desirable, and may be even a duty, if this is achieved in the spirit of rendering a temple of the Divine more fit. But to aim at this for the usual sexual end has no place in the Sadhana. Do nothing that tends to seduce. Be careful in the use of perfumes. Some are quite harmless, others extremely harmful. In general, pure flower essences and some other natural and wholesome substances like sandalwood are good. The synthetic perfumes are coarse in their effect and repulsive. The mixed perfumes, particularly if from French sources, are highly suspect. Often there are introduced in these, substances from animals, such as the oriental musk deer, which is designed by nature to be sexually exciting, and they do have that effect on the human level. Many perfume makers are quite shameless. Use of any such perfume should be carefully avoided by the Sadhaka. Here it is possible to

make a mistake quite innocently.

So far it may appear that the discipline may be hard upon the vital love, and may even mean its ultimate eradication. Such, however, is not the case. The end will be a transformation of the vital love along with the whole of the vital nature so that it will no longer be a power of the ego and the libido, both forces in the Ignorance. After the transformation there will still be a vital nature, but one fit for the Divine Manifestation, and the vital love will come into its own in a far richer form than it has ever known before. Heretofore. When the life in the Ignorance is transformed into a Divine Life then, for the first time, Life, together with the other parts of the nature, will come into a fulfillment so great that it cannot now be imagined.