

Divine versus Worldly Love



Sappho and Alcaeus by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema

. . . the bee which seeks honey should suck the flower — before it fades!

— Sir Henry Rider Haggard¹

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¹ Rider Haggard: *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1st ed. 1905); [ch. 5; Simbri to Khania.]



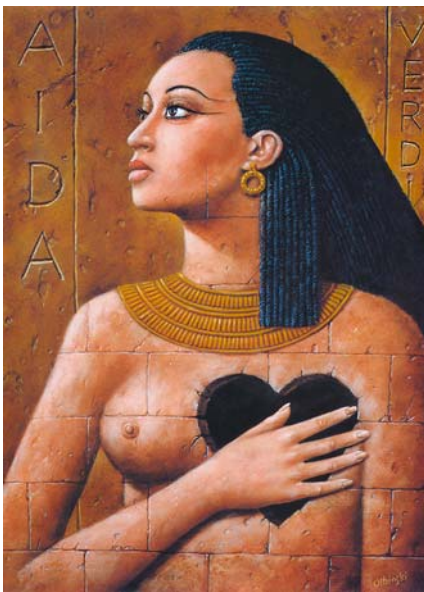
Worldly and Devotional Love contrasted

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O that I were a glove upon that hand, that I might touch
that cheek!

— William Shakespeare²

Worldly Love is an intoxication of the Astral Light.

When the magnetic atmosphere of two persons is so equilibrated that the attractive faculty of one draws the expansive faculty of the other, a tendency is produced which is termed sympathy; then imagination, calling up to it all the rays or reflections analogous to that which it experiences, makes a poem of the desires which captivate will, and, if the persons differ in sex, it occasions in them, or more commonly in the weaker of the two, a complete intoxication of the astral light, which is termed passion *par excellence*, or love. Love is one of the great instruments of magical power, but it is categorically forbidden to the magus, at least as an intoxication or passion. Woe to the Samson of the Kabbalah if he permit himself to be put asleep by Delilah! . . . Sexual love is ever an illusion, for it is the result of an imaginary mirage. The astral light is the universal seducer, typified by the serpent of Genesis. This subtle agent, ever active, ever abounding in sap, ever fruitful in alluring dreams and sensuous images; this force, which by itself is blind and subordinated to every will, whether for good or evil; this ever-renewing *circulus* of unbridled life, which produces vertigo in the imprudent; this corporeal spirit; this fiery body; this impalpable omnipresent ether; this monstrous seduction of nature — how shall we define it comprehensively and how characterise its action? To some extent indifferent in itself, it lends itself to good as to evil; it transmits light and propagates darkness; it may be called equally Lucifer and Lucifuge; it is a serpent but it is also an aureole; it is a fire, but it may belong equally to the torments of infernus or the sacrifice of incense offered up to heaven. To dispose of it, we must, like the predestined woman, set our foot upon its head.³



Aida by Rafal Olbinski

² Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet* act ii, scene 2

³ *Transcendental Magic*, pp. 71-72; [on Magical Equilibrium.]



Worldly Love is a state of severe mental perturbation.

Some people think an old love may be driven out by a new one, as one nail drives out another: but, above all things, the man thus afflicted should be advised what madness love is: for of all the perturbations of the mind, there is not one which is more vehement; for (without charging it with rapes, debaucheries, adultery, or even incest, the baseness of any of these being very blamable; not, I say, to mention these) the very perturbation of the mind in love is base of itself, for, to pass over all its acts of downright madness, what weakness do not those very things which are looked upon as indifferent argue?

Affronts and jealousies, jars, squabbles, wars,
Then peace again. The man who seeks to fix
These restless feelings, and to subjugate
Them to some regular law, is just as wise
As one who'd try to lay down rules by which
Men should go mad.⁴

Divine Love is the Law of Universal Sympathy.

. . . in astrology the stars do not *cause* our good or bad luck, but simply *indicate* the same. A man must be a psychologist and a philosopher before he can become a perfect astrologer, and understand correctly the great Law of *Universal Sympathy*. Not only astrology but magnetism, theosophy and every occult science, especially that of attraction and repulsion, depend upon this law for their existence. Without having thoroughly studied the latter, astrology becomes a *superstition*.⁵

Monosexual consciousness is a characteristic of psychic development.

. . . the real adepts . . . are the most happy of mankind, since their pleasures are connected with the higher existence, which is cloudless and pangless. The earliest among the changes felt by the true Chela is a sense of unmixed joy to be rid of the carking cares of common life, and to exist in the light of a supremely great Ideal. Not that any true adept would say aught against the naturalness and sacredness of pure sexual relationships; but that, to become an adept one must expand the finite into the Infinite, the personal into the Universal, man into Parabrahm — if one so choose to designate that Thing Unspeakable.⁶

⁴ Cicero: *Tusculan Disputations* IV, xxv; [quoting Terence's *Eunuch* act i, scene 1.14; tr. Yonge.]

⁵ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (NATIVE ASTROLOGERS) III p. 192

⁶ *Ibid.* (MR. ISAACS: A TALE OF MODERN INDIA) IV p. 342



**But in spiritual development
consciousness is asexual.**

For the love of the adept burns only for the highest of the highest — that perfect knowledge of Nature and its animating Principle, which includes in itself every quality of both sexes, and so can no more think as either man or woman, than the right or the left lobe of one's brain can think of itself apart from the whole entity of which it is a component. Monosexual consciousness exists only on the lower levels of psychic development; up above, the individual becomes merged as to consciousness, in the Universal Principle; has "become Brahma."⁷

**The first step in true occultism
is to try to apprehend the
meaning of Universal
Brotherhood.**

"True occultism is clearly set forth in the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Light on the Path*, where sufficient stress is laid upon practical occultism, but, after all, Krishna says, the kingly science and the kingly mystery is devotion to and study of the light which comes from within. The very first step in true mysticism and true occultism is to try to apprehend the meaning of Universal Brotherhood, without which the very highest progress in the practise of magic turns to ashes in the mouth."⁸

**Devotion and aspiration will
help to raise consciousness
to higher planes.**

What should be done is to realize that "the Master-Soul is one," with all that that implies; to know the meaning of the old teaching, "Thou art That." When this is done we may with impunity identify our consciousness with that of anything in nature; not before. But to do this is a lifetime's work, and beforehand we have to exhaust all Karma, which means duty; we must live for others and then we will find out all we should know, not what we would like to know. . . . Devotion and aspiration will, and do, help to bring about a proper attitude of mind, and to raise the student to a higher plane; also, they secure for the student help which is unseen by him, for devotion and aspiration put the student into a condition in which aid can be given to him, though he may, as yet, be unconscious of it. But conscious communication with one's Master can only be accomplished after long training and study. What a student has to do, and is able to do, is to fit himself to receive this training.⁹



⁷ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (MR. ISAACS: A TALE OF MODERN INDIA) IV p. 341

⁸ *Judge Letters*, II (xxii), p. 105; [quoting opening volume of *The Path*.]

⁹ *Ibid.* (ON MASTERS), p. 111



**Faith, self sacrifice, and loyalty
to the Teachers is rewarded.**

Belonging, as we do, to the so-called “inferior” Asiatic race, we cannot help having for our Masters that boundless devotion which the European condemns as *slavish*. The Western races would however do well to remember that if some of the poor Asiatics arrived at such a height of knowledge regarding the mysteries of nature, it was only due to the fact that the Chelas have always blindly followed the dictates of their Masters and have never set themselves higher than, or even as high as, their Gurus. The result was that sooner or later they were rewarded for their devotion, according to their respective capacities and merits by those who, owing to years of self-sacrifice and devotion to *their* Gurus, had in their turn become ADEPTS.¹⁰

**Give it all away or
you will lose it.**



In Devotion proper,¹¹ . . . self-surrender is an essential element, offer of service of any kind that may be needed, generally for the helping of others, and there is also present a touch, lighter or stronger, of the sense of equality-identity already achieved, a feeling of belonging to the same household, of partnership in the same concern, *esprit de corps*.¹²

“Having received, freely give; having once in thought devoted your life to the great stream of energy in which elementals and souls alike are carried — and which causes the pulse beat of our hearts — you can never claim it back again. *Seek, then, that mental devotion which strains to give.* For in the Law it is written that we must give away all or we lose it; as you need mental help, so do others who are wandering in darkness seeking for light.”¹³

Further reading

The legend of Prahlada in: Wilson H.H. (Tr. & Annot.). *The Vishnu Purana: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*. Vol. I (1st ed. 1864); Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1980; Bk. I, ch. XVII, pp. 191 *et seq.*; (on Hiranyakapishu’s futile attempts to subvert his son’s devotion to Vishnu.) See *ibid.* p. 222 *fn.* 5, for citations of this legend elsewhere.

¹⁰ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (A PROTEST) IV p. 229; [on a protest by twelve Chelas.]

¹¹ Cf. As opposed to Worship where “self-surrender is not an element, but that its essentials are an acknowledgement of inferiority and a prayer for help.” V.s. p. 155

¹² *Science of the Emotions*, pp. 155-56

¹³ *Judge Letters*, II (xi), p. 93; [quoting a writing on the walls of a temple of learning.]



Without Esoteric Philosophy guiding the soul, neither meditation nor devotion to duty can make the Wisdom of Love bare her bosom to the inner eye and reveal the sublime secrets of Cosmogony to the multitude.

Can devotion to inner contemplative life, and a life of fine unselfishness, allow of the growth of faculties otherwise dormant, and a growing recognition of the underlying unity of man and his surroundings, so that truth will make itself known from within, and help one to develop a greater physical command of the forces of nature?

Nowhere in the theosophic teachings was it stated that a life of entire devotion to one's duty alone, or "a contemplative life," graced even by "fine unselfishness" was sufficient in itself to awaken dormant faculties and lead man to the apprehension of final truths, let alone spiritual powers. To lead such life is an excellent and meritorious thing, under any circumstances, whether one be a Christian or a Mussulman, a Jew, Buddhist or Brahmin, and according to Eastern philosophy it must and will benefit a person, if not in his present, then in his future existence on earth, or what we call *rebirth*. But to expect that leading the best of lives helps one — without the help of philosophy and esoteric wisdom — to perceive "the soul of things" and develops in him "a physical command of the forces of nature," *i.e.*, endows him with abnormal or adept powers — is really too sanguine. Less than by any one else can such results be achieved by a sectarian of whatever exoteric creed. For the path to which his meditation is confined, and upon which his contemplation travels, is too narrow, too thickly covered with the weeds of dogmatic beliefs — the fruits of human fancy and error — to permit the pure ray of any Universal truth to shine upon it. His is a blind faith, and when his eyes open he has to give it up and cease being a "Christian" in the theological sense. The instance is not a good one. It is like pointing to a man immersed in "holy" water in a bathtub and asking why he has not learnt to swim in it, since he is sitting in such holy fluid. Moreover, "unfading *enthusiasm*" and "*emotional prayer*" are not exactly the conditions required for the achievement of true theosophic and spiritual development. These means can at best help to *psychic* development. If our correspondent is anxious to learn the difference between *Spiritual* and *Psychic* wisdom, between *Sophia* and *Psyche*, let him turn to the Greek text (the English translation is garbled) in the *Epistle of James*, iii, 15-16,¹⁴ and he will know that one is *divine* and the other terrestrial, "sensual devilish." . . . [those] persons in general, leading lives of spiritual meditation, and those who . . . live "always in the white light of exalted contemplation," do not pursue truth in the right direction, and therefore they fail;¹⁵

¹⁴ [Cf. 15 ουκ εστιν αυτη η σοφια ανωθεν καταρχομενη αλλα επιγειος ψυχικη δαιμονιωδης | 16 οπου γαρ ζηλος και εριθεια εκει ακαταστασια και παν φαυλον πραγμα.]

¹⁵ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (CORRESPONDENCE) IX pp. 170-71; [Editor's Reply to a query from a Christian correspondent.]



Angel worship is misplaced and ill-advised

Recognition of the *actual existence* of such *Beings* — which, however exalted, are still gradually evolved *creatures* and finite — and even reverence for some of them is not *worship*. The latter is an elastic word, one that has been made threadbare by the poverty of the English tongue. We address a magistrate as his “worship,” but it can hardly be said that we pay to him *divine* honours. A mother often worships her children, a husband his wife, and *vice versa*, but none of these prays to the object of his worship. But in neither case does it apply to the Occultists. An Occultist’s reverence for certain high Spirits may be very great in some cases; aye, perhaps even as great as the reverence felt by some Christians for their Archangels Michael and Gabriel and their (St.) George of Cappadocia — the learned purveyor of Constantine’s armies. But it stops there. For the Theosophists these planetary “angels” occupy no higher place than that which Virgil assigns them:

“They boast ethereal vigour and are form’d
From seeds of heavenly birth.”¹⁶

as does also every mortal. Each and all are occult potencies having sway over certain attributes of nature. And, if once attracted to a mortal, they do help him in certain things. Yet, on the whole, the less one has to do with them the better.¹⁷



Sistine Madonna (detail) 1512-1514, Raphael, Dresden

¹⁶ [These verses are from the *Aeneid* Book vi, 730-31, although it is difficult to say what particular poetical translation is used by H.P.B. In the *Loeb Classical Series*, H. Rashton Fairclough translates the original text as: “fiery is their vigour and divine the source of those life-seeds . . .” — Boris de Zirkoff.]

¹⁷ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (STAR-ANGEL WORSHIP IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH) X pp. 13-14



Divine, Worldly, and Devotional Love summed up

From *Compassion: the Spirit of Truth* (2009), pp. 160-62

Our “too great dependence upon physical facts led to a growth of materialism and a decadence of spirituality and faith”¹⁸ says HP Blavatsky. Another drawback of materialism is the lack of a suitable vocabulary that can impart spiritual ideas. The Sanskrit term Bhakti, for example, which is the theme of this chapter, is variously interpreted as: Devotion, Devotional Service of God, Divine Grace, Divine Love, Lord’s Mercy, Love of God, Mercy, Worship, and so on. Bhakti may be understood better if the triune hypostasis of Love is conceptualised not statically but dynamically as “movement” and “direction” of Consciousness. Namely,

- *Divine Love* is the Truth of Unity and First Principle, Immutable, Eternal, beyond space, time, and speculation.
- *Worldly Love* issues first in time when *The One Consciousness* disintegrates into the Many empowering them to evolve individually in the darkness of matter.
- *Devotional Love*, or Bhakti, is Worldly Love’s U-turn¹⁹ aroused when Consciousness reaches the nadir of the cycle. The Many (not operating in unison of course but individually) begin *de*-fragmenting, *in*-volving, *re*-integrating, thus marking Consciousness’ ascending arc.

Worldly and Devotional Love are the twin arcs of a Cycle of Necessity.²⁰

. . . a constant cyclic motion from within outwardly and back again, an out-breathing and in-breathing of the ONE LIFE, or Jiva, the synonym of the Absolute and Unknowable Deity.²¹

It was for the benefit of those who are ready to rise to their wider responsibilities that Krishna asked Narada to explain Bhakti.²²

The following is an expanded view of the ternary nature of Love:

1. Divine Love or Compassion is the Great Law of Universal Sympathy and Sacrifice, or the Homogeneity of the Unmanifested about to be thrown into the Heterogeneity of Manifestation by the same Law: It “dies” periodically so that Its ideation can “live.” The crowning achievement of Its Great Sacrifice is Self-Consciousness embodied in humanity at large, the “Love of Gods.” Divine Love is the Spirit, Heart, and Soul of the Universe, *Love of The One for All* — and the LAW of LAWS.

2. Worldly Love or Selfishness is the Path of Action: the “descending arc of Consciousness” towards objectivity and materiality, or *Love of self apart from All*.

¹⁸ *Isis Unveiled*, I p. 15

¹⁹ See ch. 8, § “Merge your self in Self,” p. 306, *fn.* 5 on metanoia.

²⁰ See Appendix B: “Action, Renunciation, and their endless variants,” p. 339.

²¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII p. 607 *fn.*

²² See also “Divine vs. Worldly Love” in our Higher Ethics and Devotion Series.



Worldly Love is synonymous with engagement in, and attachment to, a proud, isolated life imprisoned in clay. It may appear blazing and exuberant (as in “la joie de vivre”) but it has nothing to do with Bhakti’s calm, self-sacrificing Devotion. Yet, since Love rules everything, even Selfishness is Love but misdirected to, and jealously kept for, one’s self. Self-Love is False Devotion of course but Love, nevertheless.²³

Alienation from *The One* is the upshot of egocentricity, whether expressed as Love²⁴ and a wish to be united with an object of pleasure, or as Hate and a wish to be dis-united from an object of pain. In the mayavic world of duality, love and hate, virtue and vice, are ever commingling and readily converting into each other.²⁵ And in the process they shackle us, hands and feet, on this planet,

. . . the greatest of all Hells.²⁶

3. Devotional Love or Bhakti is the Path of Renunciation: the “ascending arc of Consciousness” towards subjectivity and spirituality, or *Love of All for The One*.

Metaphysically, Bhakti is the ardent desire of a self-conscious individuality to resume its original condition of Unconscious Homogeneousness, to be re-absorbed in Oneness from whence it came, and where unalloyed love and joy subsist.

Ethically, Bhakti is total commitment to, and Devotional Love of, an authentic Brotherhood of Man that embraces all fellow beings and Divine Nature in her entirety. Bhakti’s sole precondition is the surrender of I-ness or false individuality. Or, at least, a solemn pledge to do so.

The objectives are total and unswerving dedication:

To LAW²⁷ in its transcendental aspect;

To Humanity at large being LAW’s manifested aspect, and;

To Nature in her tireless efforts to accomplish the Divine Plan.²⁸

The pledge is to one’s own Higher Self.

²³ See also “The Story of Narada and the Supremacy of Bhakti” in our Higher Ethics and Devotion Series.

²⁴ Here is how Bhagavan Das defines the primary e-motion of Love: “Love is a desire to perpetuate a situation if pleasurable. The prospective fulfilment thereof of the desire in expectation and imagination gives a foretaste of pleasure. The feeling of Love implies a wish to be nearer. A desire to take in, to absorb, to embrace. A yearning to be united with object that causes pleasure.” Cf. “Emotion’s Triune Nature” in our Constitution of Man Series.

²⁵ Cf. “Dullness is attributed to a modest man; hypocrisy to one who has a liking for religious observances; roguery to one who leads a life of sanctity; cruelty to a warrior; want of discrimination to one devoted to meditation; meanness to one who speaks agreeably; arrogance to a spiritual man; garrulity to an orator; and imbecility to a steady man. What virtue is there then that is not stigmatised by the wicked?” Bhartrhari: *Niti Shataka*, 54 (tr. Kale)

²⁶ Cf. “*Myalba* is our earth — pertinently called “Hell,” and the greatest of all Hells, by the esoteric school. The esoteric doctrine knows of no hell or place of punishment other than on a man-bearing planet or earth.” *Voice of the Silence*, frag. III note 118 (to vs. 313 p. 72); p. 97 in glos. of Chinese & Centenary eds.

²⁷ Narada’s allusions to *The One* as *This* (asmin, aph. 2), *That* (tasmin, aph. 9), or Lord (*Bhagavat*, aph. 37-38, a title of Buddha and Krishna), have often been deified in exoteric interpretations. Occultism’s nearest approximation to the “god” of the theists, is Impersonal Law that governs the periodic projections of an Infinite Unconscious Mind onto the screen of personal and finite self-conscious minds. (Cf. ch. 4.)

²⁸ Cf. “Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.” *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I vs. 66 p. 14



Mystically, Bhakti frees the Spiritual self from the clutches of the Psychic, and consigns It to the Universal Self, which is Plato's *Good*, for the common good.

Bhakti is diametrically opposed to the servile worship of the imaginary gods of the mystics who, even though are completely surrounded by divinity, cannot see the wood for the trees.²⁹ When self identifies with all selves and vows to live for them, gratitude for *The One* kindles the embers of Divine Compassion and summons Devotion to action. Only then, can true love for each other blossom and save us from ourselves. Bhakti cannot be "cultivated," "developed," or circumvented by any other means.

EDITOR



Courtship by James C Christensen

²⁹ For the difference between Worship and Devotion, see ch. 8, § "Lose yourself in the Sea of Devotion," pp. 263ff.

