Chapter One

Divine Love, Psychic Love and Human Love

Divine Love and Its Manifestation

To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole crown and essence of our Yoga. But it has always seemed to me impossible unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth — what I call the Supramental — and its Divine Power. Otherwise Love itself blinded by the confusions of this present consciousness may stumble in its human receptacles and, even otherwise, may find itself unrecognised, rejected or rapidly degenerating and lost in the frailty of man’s inferior nature. But when it comes in the Divine Truth and Power, Divine Love descends first as something transcendent and universal and out of that transcendence and universality it applies itself to persons according to the Divine Truth and Will, creating a vaster, greater, purer personal love than any the human mind or heart can now imagine. It is when one has felt this descent that one can be really an instrument for the birth and action of the Divine Love in the world.

* It [the Divine Truth] can come solely as knowledge or as knowledge + calm and peace or knowledge with power. It is not always accompanied by Ananda.

What was meant [in the preceding letter] was that it is possible to have some kind of Ananda on all the planes, vital, mental, physical; but if one wants to live securely in the highest divine Ananda it can only be done by bringing down the (supramental) Truth and living first in the supramental Light. But this is the eventual aim of the Yoga; it does not debar one from accepting whatever Ananda comes on the way. Only, mere pleasure or vital
excitement and gratification must not be mistaken for Ananda.

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The human form is naturally unable to bear the Divine Love or contain it, because it is itself a creation of the ignorance, weak and impure. It must be transformed in order to be capable of that; it must become strong and pure. First of all, it must have the strength to love the Divine alone and turn away from all other ties. But besides that a new consciousness must be created in it — first a consciousness of pure and purifying Divine Peace from above which must take hold of all down to the most physical — then in that peace an increasing inner strength pure and unegoistic — then the Divine Light and Knowledge transforming all the consciousness and movements. When this has been done, then the human form can contain the Divine Love and Ananda. Till then the touches of the Divine Love and Ananda are usually momentary or brief, they cannot remain. In an impure consciousness the Divine Love if it came in would create a perturbation and possibly be attacked by a mixture which would make it impossible for it to stay. It is therefore that touches only can come.

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I understand that it is the physical consciousness which has come up forcibly with the old vital human movements and feelings and this has clouded for the moment the sense of higher things and the aspiration for Truth and Purity that is their atmosphere. The Divine Love may not be able yet to manifest on the physical plane, humanity being what it is, as fully and freely as it would otherwise do, but that does not make it less close or intense than the human. It is there waiting to be understood and accepted and meanwhile giving all the help you can receive to raise and widen you into the consciousness in which it will be no longer possible for these difficulties and these misunderstandings to recur — the state in which there is possible the full and perfect union.

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It [the Divine Love] exists in itself and does not depend on outer contact or outer expression. Whether it shall express itself outwardly or how it will express itself outwardly depends on the spiritual truth that has to be manifested.

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There is the one divine Love secret in all things, but the manifestation [of it in matter and in forms of life] depends upon the state of consciousness and its organisation.

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I do not exactly know what you mean by the Divine Love being established down to the subconscious. What love? the soul’s love for the Divine? or the principle of the Divine Love and Ananda which is the highest thing that can be reached? To establish the latter down to the subconscious is a thing which would mean the entire transformation of the whole being and it cannot be done except as the result of the supramental change which is as yet far away. The other may be established even now in principle, but to make it living and complete in the whole being would mean the psychic transformation completed with the spiritual also well under way already.

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The Intuitive or Overmind are more open to the truth of Divine Love and more capable of universalising love than the mind ordinarily is — love there is also more calm in its intensity, less ego-bound than in the mental parts. But the mind can also approach their quality of love, if the love in it grows psychic and spiritual.

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By becoming divine in nature [one can love divinely]; there is no other way.
Divine Love and Psychic Love

The Divine’s love is that which comes from above poured down from the Divine Oneness and its Ananda on the being — psychic love is a form taken by divine love in the human being according to the needs and possibilities of the human consciousness.

If love is psychic in its nature, it always brings the sense of oneness or at least of an inner intimate closeness of being. The Divine Love is based upon oneness and the psychic derives from the Divine Love.

The psychic love is pure and full of self-giving without egoistic demand, but it is human and can err and suffer. The Divine Love is something much vaster and deeper and full of light and ananda.

Psychic Love

When there is no demand or desire, only love and self-giving, that is the psychic love.

Psychic love is quite satisfying, and it can change even the vital love into something great and beautiful.

Why do you want something remarkable? The love of the soul is the true thing, simple and absolute — the rest is good only if it is a means of manifestation of the soul’s love.

The soul’s love and joy come from within from the psychic being. What comes from above is the Ananda of the higher consciousness.
The love that belongs to the spiritual planes is of a different kind — the psychic has its own more personal love, bhakti, surrender. Love in the higher or spiritual mind is more universal and impersonal. The two must join together to make the highest divine love.

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The psychic realisation is one of diversity in unity (the portion and the whole); it is not one of dissolving like a drop of water in the sea — for then no love or devotion is possible unless it is love of oneself, devotion to oneself.

Universal Love and Psychic Love

Universal love is always universal — psychic love can individualise itself.

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Cosmic love depends on the realisation of oneness of self with all. Psychic love or feeling for all can exist without this realisation.

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The oneness with all in its basis is something self-existent and self-content which does not need expression. When it does express itself as love, it is something wide and universal, untroubled and firm even when it is intense. This is in the basic cosmic oneness. There is also the surface cosmic consciousness which is an awareness of the play of cosmic forces — here anything may rise, sex also. It is this part that needs the perfect psychisation, otherwise one cannot even hold, contain and deal with it in the proper way.

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I do not quite understand X’s question. Does he mean to ask whether one can become conscious of the Divine’s Love for all creatures before one is oneself filled with the universal love for others? If that is the meaning, then one can certainly become
conscious of the Divine’s Love before one has oneself the universal love — one can become conscious of it by contact with the Divine in oneself. Naturally the consciousness of it should lead to the development of a universal love for all. But if he means a love that is divine, not tainted by the lower movements, then it is true that until there comes the peace, purity, freedom from ego, wideness, light of the universal consciousness which is the basis of the universal love, it is difficult to have a love that is free from all the defects, limitations, taints of ordinary human love. The more one has of the universality the more one tends to be freed from these things.

Love for the Divine

The love which is turned towards the Divine ought not to be the usual vital feeling which men call by that name; for that is not love, but only a vital desire, an instinct of appropriation, the impulse to possess and monopolise. Not only is this not the divine Love, but it ought not to be allowed to mix in the least degree in the Yoga. The true love for the Divine is a self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender; it makes no claim, imposes no condition, strikes no bargain, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger — for these things are not in its composition. In return the Divine Mother also gives herself, but freely — and this represents itself in an inner giving — her presence in your mind, your vital, your physical consciousness, her power re-creating you in the divine nature, taking up all the movements of your being and directing them towards perfection and fulfilment, her love enveloping you and carrying you in its arms Godwards. It is this that you must aspire to feel and possess in all your parts down to the very material, and here there is no limitation either of time or of completeness. If one truly aspires and gets it, there ought to be no room for any other claim or for any disappointed desire. And if one truly aspires, one does unfailingly get it, more and more as the purification proceeds and the nature undergoes its needed change.

Keep your love pure of all selfish claim and desire; you will
find that you are getting all the love that you can bear and absorb in answer.

Realise also that the Realisation must come first, the work to be done, not the satisfaction of claim and desire. It is only when the Divine Consciousness in its supramental Light and Power has descended and transformed the physical that other things can be given a prominent place — and then too it will not be the satisfaction of desire, but the fulfilment of the Divine Truth in each and all and in the new life that is to express it. In the divine life all is for the sake of the Divine and not for the sake of the ego.

I should perhaps add one or two things to avoid misapprehensions. First, the love for the Divine of which I speak is not a psychic love only; it is the love of all the being, the vital and vital-physical included, — all are capable of the same self-giving. It is a mistake to believe that if the vital loves, it must be a love that demands and imposes the satisfaction of its desire; it is a mistake to think that it must be either that or else the vital, in order to escape from its “attachment”, must draw away altogether from the object of its love. The vital can be as absolute in its unquestioning self-giving as any other part of the nature; nothing can be more generous than its movement when it forgets self for the Beloved. The vital and physical should both give themselves in the true way — the way of true love, not of ego-desire.

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I suppose “love” expresses something more intense than bhālobāsha which can include mere liking or affection. But whether love or bhālobāsha, the human feeling is always either based on or strongly mixed with ego, — that is why it cannot be pure. It is said in the Upanishad, “One does not love the wife for the sake of the wife” or the child or friend etc. as the case may be “but for one’s self’s sake one loves the wife”. There is usually a hope of return, of benefit or advantage of some kind, or of certain pleasures and satisfactions, mental, vital or physical, that the person loved can give. Remove these things and the love very
soon sinks, diminishes or disappears or turns into anger, reproach, indifference or even hatred. But there is also an element of habit, something that makes the presence of the person loved a sort of necessity because it has always been there — and this is sometimes so strong that even in spite of entire incompatibility of temper, fierce antagonism, something like hatred, it lasts and even these gulfs of discord are not enough to make the persons part; in other cases this feeling is more tepid and after a time one gets accustomed to separation or accepts a substitute. There is again often the element of some kind of spontaneous attraction or affinity, mental, vital or physical, which gives a stronger cohesion to the love. Lastly, there is in the highest or deepest kind of love the psychic element, which comes from the inmost heart and soul, a kind of inner union or self-giving or at least a seeking for that, a tie or an urge independent of other conditions or elements, existing for its own sake and not for any mental, vital or physical pleasure, satisfaction, interest or habit. But usually the psychic element in human love, even where it is present, is so much mixed, overloaded and hidden under the others that it has little chance of fulfilling itself or achieving its own natural purity and fullness. What is called love is therefore sometimes one thing, sometimes another, most often a confused mixture, and it is impossible to give a general answer to the questions you put as to what is meant by love in such and such a phrase. It depends on the persons and the circumstances.

When the love goes towards the Divine, there is still this ordinary human element in it. There is the call for a return and if the return does not seem to come, the love may sink; there is the self-interest, the demand for the Divine as a giver of all that the human being wants and, if the demands are not acceded to, abhimana against the Divine, loss of faith, loss of fervour. Etc. etc. But the true love for the Divine is in its fundamental nature not of this kind, but psychic and spiritual. The psychic element is the need of the inmost being for self-giving, love, adoration, union which can only be fully satisfied by the Divine. The spiritual element is the need of the being for contact, merging, union with its own highest and whole self and source of being and
consciousness and bliss, the Divine. These two are two sides of the same thing. The mind, vital, physical can be the supports and recipients of this love, but they can be fully that only when they become remoulded into harmony with the psychic and spiritual elements of the being and no longer bring in the lower insistences of the ego.

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Love for the Divine must be there in all the being — not only in the spirit and the psychic heart, but in the vital and the physical consciousness also.

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The influence of the love for the Divine when it takes hold of any part is to turn it towards the Divine — as you describe it “concentration on the Mother” — and in the end all is gathered and harmonised around this central turn of the being. The difficulty is with the mechanical parts of the being in which the old thoughts go on recurring by habit. If the concentration continues to grow, this becomes a thing of little importance at the circumference of the mind and in the end drops away to be replaced by things that belong to the new consciousness.

**Human Love in the Sadhana**

And first about human love in the sadhana. The soul’s turning through love to the Divine must be through a love that is essentially divine, but as the instrument of expression at first is a human nature, it takes the forms of human love and bhakti. It is only as the consciousness deepens, heightens and changes that that greater eternal love can grow in it and openly transform the human into the divine. But in human love itself there are several kinds of motive-forces. There is a psychic human love which rises from deep within and is the result of the meeting of the inner being with that which calls it towards a divine joy and union; it is, once it becomes aware of itself, something lasting, self-existent, not dependent upon external satisfactions,
not capable of diminution by external causes, not self-regarding, not prone to demand or bargain but giving itself simply and spontaneously, not moved to or broken by misunderstandings, disappointments, strife and anger, but pressing always straight towards the inner union. It is this psychic love that is closest to the divine and it is therefore the right and best way of love and bhakti. But that does not mean that the other parts of the being, the vital and physical included, are not to be used as means of expression or that they are not to share in the full play and the whole meaning of love, even of divine love. On the contrary, they are a means and can be a great part of the complete expression of divine love, — provided they have the right and not the wrong movement. There are in the vital itself two kinds of love, — one full of joy and confidence and abandon, generous, un bargaining, un grudging and very absolute in its dedication and this is akin to the psychic and well-fitted to be its complement and a means of expression of the divine love. And neither does the psychic love or the divine love despise a physical means of expression wherever that is pure and right and possible; it does not depend upon that, it does not diminish, revolt or go out like a snuffed candle when it is deprived of any such means; but when it can use it, it does so with joy and gratitude. Physical means can be and are used in the approach to divine love and worship; they have not been allowed merely as a concession to human weakness, nor is it the fact that in the psychic way there is no place for such things. On the contrary they are one means of approaching the Divine and receiving the Light and materialising the psychic contact, and so long as it is done in the right spirit and they are used for the true purpose they have their place. It is only if they are misused or the approach is not right because tainted by indifference and inertia, or revolt or hostility, or some gross desire, that they are out of place and can have a contrary effect.

But there is another way of vital love which is more usually the way of human nature and that is a way of ego and desire. It is full of vital craving, desire and demand; its continuance depends upon the satisfaction of its demands; if it does not get what it
craves, or even imagines that it is not being treated as it deserves — for it is full of imaginations, misunderstandings, jealousies, misinterpretations — it at once turns to sorrow, wounded feeling, revolt, pride, anger, all kinds of disorder, finally cessation and departure. A love of this kind is in its very nature ephemeral and unreliable and it cannot be made a foundation for divine love. There has been too much of this kind in the relations of the sadhaks with the Mother — approaching her, I suppose, as a human mother with all the reactions of the lower vital nature. For a long time it was perforce tolerated — and this was the concession made to human weakness — even accepted in the beginning as a thing too prominent in the human being not to be there to some extent but to be transformed by degrees; but too often, it has refused to transform itself and has made itself a source of confusion, disorder, asiddhi, sometimes complete disaster. It is for this reason that we discourage this lower vital way of human love and would like people to reject and eliminate these elements as soon as may be from their nature. Love should be a flowering of joy and union and confidence and self-giving and Ananda, — but this lower vital way is only a source of suffering, trouble, disappointment, disillusion and disunion. Even a slight element of it shakes the foundations of peace and replaces the movement towards Ananda by a fall towards sorrow, discontent and Nirananda.

In your own case you often write in your wrong moods as if human love, even with some of these lower ingredients, were the only thing possible to you. But that is not so at all, for it contradicts your own deepest experiences. Always what your inner being has asked is Love, Bhakti, Ananda and whenever it comes to the surface it is, even if only in a first elementary form, the divine love which it brings with it. A basis of deep and intense calm and stillness, a great intensity of emotion and Bhakti, an inrush of Ananda, this is in these moments your repeated experience. On the other hand when you insist too much on the love which exists by external cravings, what comes is the other movement — fits of despondency, sorrow, Nirananda. In stressing on the psychic basis, in wishing you to conquer this
other movement, I am only pointing you to the true way of your own nature — of which the psychic bhakti, the true vital love are the real moving forces, and the other is only a superficial immixture.

**Human Love and Divine Love**

May I put in a plea for my poor Supramental against which you seem to have something like a grudge? I should like to say that the Supramental is not something cold, distant and remote; on the contrary, when it descends into the physical, it will mean the full outflow and full completeness and expression of love on the vital and physical as well as on every other plane. And it is because I know it means this and many other desirable things that I am so insistent on bringing it down as soon as possible.

And let me say also that, as regards human love and divine love, I admitted the first as that from which we have to proceed and to arrive at the other, intensifying and transforming into it, not eliminating, human love. Divine Love, in my view of it, is again not something ethereal, cold and far, but a love absolutely intense, intimate and full of unity, closeness and rapture using all the nature for its expression. Certainly, it is without the confusions and disorders of the present lower vital nature which it will change into something entirely warm, deep and intense; but that is no reason for supposing that it will lose anything that is true and happy in the elements of love.

*Love cannot be cold — for there is no such thing as cold love, but the love of which the Mother speaks in that passage is something very pure, fixed and constant; it does not leap like fire and sink for want of fuel, but is steady and all-embracing.*

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1 “It [the being] knows that this active state of love should be constant and impersonal, that is, absolutely independent of circumstances and persons, since it cannot and must not be concentrated upon any one thing in particular...” *The Mother, Prayers and Meditations*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), Collected Works of the Mother (second edition), vol. 1, p. 335.
and self-existent like the light of the sun. There is also a divine love that is personal, but it is not like the ordinary personal human love dependent on any return from the person — it is personal but not egoistic, — it goes from the real being in the one to the real being in the other. But to find that, liberation from the ordinary human way of approach is necessary.

* The Divine Love, unlike the human, is deep and vast and silent; one must become quiet and wide to be aware of it and reply to it. X must make it his whole object to be surrendered so that he may become a vessel and instrument — leaving it to the Divine Wisdom and Love to fill him with what is needed. Let him also fix this in the mind not to insist that in a given time he must progress, develop, get realisation; whatever time it takes, he must be prepared to wait and persevere and make his whole life an aspiration and an opening for the one thing only, the Divine. To give oneself is the secret of sadhana, not to demand and acquire. The more one gives oneself, the more the power to receive will grow. But for that all impatience and revolt must go; all suggestions of not getting, not being helped, not being loved, going away, of abandoning life or the spiritual endeavour must be rejected.

* The Mother did not tell you that love is not an emotion, but that Divine Love is not an emotion, — a very different thing to say. Human love is made up of emotion, passion and desire, — all of them vital movements, therefore bound to the disabilities of the human vital nature. Emotion is an excellent and indispensable thing in human nature, in spite of all its shortcomings and dangers, — just as mental ideas are excellent and indispensable things in their own field in the human stage. But our aim is to go beyond mental ideas into the light of the supramental Truth, which exists not by ideative thought but by direct vision and identity. In the same way our aim is to go beyond emotion to the height and depth and intensity of the Divine Love and there feel
through the inner psychic heart an inexhaustible oneness with 
the Divine which the spasmodic leapings of the vital emotions 
cannot reach or experience.

As supramental Truth is not merely a sublimation of our 
mental ideas, so Divine Love is not merely a sublimation of 
human emotions; it is a different consciousness, with a different 
quality, movement and substance.

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Human love is mostly vital and physical with a mental support 
— it can take an unselfish, noble and pure form and expression 
only if it is touched by the psychic. It is true, as you say, that 
it is more usually a mixture of ignorance, attachment, passion 
and desire. But whatever it may be, one who wishes to reach 
the Divine must not burden himself with human loves and at-
tachments, for they form so many fetters and hamper his steps, 
turning him away besides from the concentration of his emotions 
on the one supreme object of love.

There is such a thing as psychic love, pure, without demand, 
sincere in self-giving, but it is not usually left pure in the attrac-
tion of human beings to one another. One must also be on one’s 
guard against the profession of psychic love when one is doing 
sadhana, — for that is most often a cloak and justification for 
yielding to a vital attraction or attachment.

Universal love is the spiritual founded on the sense of the 
One and the Divine everywhere and the change of the personal 
into a wide universal consciousness, free from attachment and 
ignorance.

Divine love is of two kinds — the Divine love for the creation 
and the souls that are part of itself and the love of the seeker 
and love for the Divine Beloved; it has both a personal and 
impersonal element, but the personal is free here from all lower 
elements or bondage to the vital and physical instincts.

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If I am to take some expressions in one of your letters at 
their face value you seem to put forward — at least as a poet
— three notions about spiritual seeking which are somewhat extraordinary.

1. “It is the same love which is addressed towards a ‘carnal prize’ and towards the Divine.” I should imagine that one who approached the Divine with a “carnal” or an untransformed vital love would embrace something of the vital world but certainly get nowhere near the Divine.

2. The Divine in itself is something cold and empty and dark — only human love gives it some warmth and attraction. I always thought that the Divine was the supreme ineffable Ananda of which human love and delight is only a clouded and fallen ray — most often hardly even that — compared with the empyrean of ethereal fire. How can the luminous eternal Ananda be something cold and dark, I should like to know?

3. Or perhaps you only mean that the Divine Infinite which the calm sages seek is by the very fact of their calm and wisdom something cold, dark, empty, gloomy. Has it not occurred to you that if they really sought for something cold, dark and gloomy as the supreme good, they would not be sages but asses? The sages sought after the Divine as the supreme existence, consciousness and Bliss, the Light beyond lights by which all this shineth, the joy beyond all other joys. Even the seekers of the Absolute Indefinable find in it the peace that passeth all understanding and that is nothing cold, dark or gloomy. The Nihilistic Buddhists? But they did not believe in the Divine or in Eternity, only in Non-existence and what they sought was not the supreme good, but self-extinction and the end of suffering — an intelligible aim, but something quite different from the stress towards the Eternal.

The Vital and Love for the Divine

When the vital joins in the love for the Divine, it brings into it heroism, enthusiasm, intensity, absoluteness, exclusiveness, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the total and passionate self-giving of all the nature. It is the vital passion for the Divine that creates the spiritual heroes, conquerors or martyrs.

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I have never said that the vital is to have no part in the love for the Divine, only that it must purify and ennoble itself in the light of the psychic being. The results of self-loving love between human beings are so poor and contrary in the end — that is what I mean by the ordinary vital love — that I want something purer and nobler and higher in the vital also for the movement towards the Divine.

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The outer being has to learn to love in the psychic way without ego. If it loves in the egoistic vital way, then it only creates difficulties for itself and for the sadhana and for the Mother.

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Yes, that is the nature of vital love. It is based on desire and the sense of claim or sense of possession; psychic love is based on self-giving.

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If the love is absolute and complete and there has never been any vital demand connected with it, then suggestions of revolt cannot come.

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Formerly whenever the opening of the heart came you began to associate it with vital enjoyment and turned it upon others instead of turning the love towards the Divine and keeping its essential purity — so also the higher consciousness when it came down was being dispersed in mental movements. This time they were both coming in a purer form, but the danger of the mental and vital forces catching hold of them is still there and then both are likely to stop or break down. So you must be careful to allow no vital deviation this time.

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Your difficulty is that the vital has not yet arrived at the secret of the self-existent Ananda of love, the Ananda of love’s own pure
truth, the inner beauty of it for its own sake, the secret of the inner abiding ecstasy; it cannot yet believe that the thing exists. But it is travelling towards it and this feeling was probably a stage — a groping after a purer vital emotion on the way to the purest of all which is one with the Divine.

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What he describes is a vital demand of the ego for emotional self-satisfaction; it is Maya. It is not true love, for true love seeks for union and self-giving and that is the love one must bring to the Divine. This vital (so-called) love brings only suffering and disappointment; it does not bring happiness; it never gets satisfied and, even if it is granted something that it asks for, it is never satisfied with it.

It is perfectly possible to get rid of this Maya of the vital demand, if one wishes to do it, — but the will to do it must be sincere. If he is sincere in his will, he will certainly get help and protection.

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Generally when people speak of vital intimacy they mean something very external which does not need to be brought down since it is common in human life. If it is the inner vital intimacy with the Divine, then of course that makes the union more complete, provided it is based on the psychic.

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2 The correspondent wrote, “I want a heart that can respond to all my moods, that can understand me, that can do me justice, that can love me intensely and exclusively.” Sri Aurobindo’s reply was written to his secretary, who answered the enquirer. — Ed.