

Extract from a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Ye have asked about the significance of the expression “sacrificial lover”. The mystery of sacrifice is a profound one, requiring detailed explanation, but briefly it may be stated that sacrificial love is the love shown by the moth towards the candle, by the parched wayfarer towards the living fountain, by the true lover towards his beloved, by the yearning heart towards the goal of its desire. The sacrificial lover, in other words, should become entirely forgetful of self, enthralled by the Beloved, enamoured of His countenance, and enraptured by His locks. Utterly unmindful of body, soul, life, comfort, and existence, he should seek the good-pleasure of the True One, desire to gaze upon His countenance, and wish to follow in His way. Inebriated by the cup He proffereth and submissive in His hands, he should become completely oblivious of his own existence so that, like unto the light of truth, he may shine forth from the horizon of eternity. This is the first degree of sacrifice. As for the second degree, it is in man’s becoming rid of all attachment to the human world and finding deliverance from the darkness of the contingent realm. In this degree, the radiance of the All-Merciful should so suffuse and permeate his being that this nether world may pale into non-existence before the reality of the Kingdom. When a lump of iron is cast into the forge, its ferrous qualities of blackness, coldness, and solidity, which symbolize the attributes of the human world, are concealed and disappear, while the fire’s distinctive qualities of redness, heat, and fluidity, which symbolize the virtues of the Kingdom, become visibly apparent in it, so that the iron may be said to have sacrificed its own qualities and characteristics to the fire, and to have acquired the virtues of that element. Even so is it with man: When, released from earthly bonds, from human imperfections, and from the darkness of the animal world, he setteth foot within the realm of the unbounded, partaketh of the outpourings of the unseen world, and acquireth divine virtues and perfections, then will he become a sacrificial lover of the Sun of Truth and make haste with heart and soul to reach the place of sacrifice.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá