

3.8 Compassion

WISE SAYING

Just as a mother responds to her small, beloved, and suffering child, when you develop a spontaneous and equal sense of compassion toward all sentient beings, you have perfected the practice of compassion. And this is known as great compassion. (The Dalai Lama)

From Discourses of Sai Baba

WHAT IS COMPASSION

What is compassion? Seeing a person in distress and expressing sympathy verbally is not compassion. Compassion must express itself in action to relieve the suffering. Nor should you adopt an attitude of aloofness or indifference on the plea that each one is suffering for his own folly. Though suffering may be due to one's mistakes -- mistakes to which everyone is prone -- we should seek to remedy such suffering just as we try to get rid of our own suffering. Some people try to show off their sympathy by setting up charitable institutions like hospitals, etc.

True compassion should emanate from the heart. It should not find expression in outward manifestations which only reveal one's vanity. In the Sathya Sai Organisations there is no place for such demonstrations of vanity. Everything that is done to help the poor or the suffering should be based on the feelings coming from the heart and appealing to the hearts of those who are helped. (140784)

Compassion is not mere display of kindness or sympathy to someone in distress. It calls for complete identification with the suffering experienced by another and relieving that suffering as a means of relieving the agony experienced by himself.

A calf was caught in a slushy pond while trying to reach a small pool of water. A crowd of urchins were watching with glee the plight of the calf which was unable to move forward because of the slush. An ascetic who was passing by saw the plight of the calf and, taking it out of the mud, carried it on his back to the pool of water. The urchins asked him why he had done this, while they were watching to see how the calf was going to get near the water. The sanyasi told them that the sight of the struggling calf had caused him great anguish and, to relieve himself of his agony, he had gone to the relief of the calf.

When any service or help is rendered to anyone, this is the spirit in which it should be done. You must feel you are helping yourself when you are helping another.

(SS April 86, 100)

This birth has been undertaken by you for this very mission: the mission of crucifying the ego on the cross of compassion. An opportunity to be of some service to fellow men comes to you as a gift from God. Serve with that sense of gratitude, for it is God who accepts it from you. Prepare yourselves for serving others, not only by learning the skill of first aid, the rules of the road, the technique of blood donation, the art of handling mikes and loudspeakers, wiring and fitting electric lines etc; but at the time when you are not actively engaged in some such activity, be busy with japam (recitation of the Name of God), dhyanam (meditation) or nama smaranam. Fill yourselves with God, lest you go dry and cruel. *(070171)*

COMPASSION IS THE GREATEST VIRTUE

Compassion towards all creatures is the greatest virtue, wilful injury to any creature is the worst vice. Have full faith in this; spread love and joy, through compassion, and be full of joy and peace, yourself. You do not have joy and peace now, mainly because, your vision is warped and wobbling.

The vision is now directed towards the faults and failings of others, never towards one's own faults and failings. The ears too delight when stories of the failures and foibles of others are related. No attempt is made to examine the failures and foibles of oneself. Really speaking, enquiry and the investigation have to begin with oneself. For, what we see in others is the reflection of our own selves, our own prejudices and preferences.

Besides, when your attention is focused on faults and failures, vices and wrongs, the mind too becomes infected with the pollution and it starts relishing only experiences that smack of such tastes. Hence, the lives of such people lose the peace and joy that are the heritage of the wise and the wary. *(251074)*

There was an Emperor once who asked the sages who visited his palace, "Who is the best among men? Which moment of time is most blessed? Which act is most beneficial?" He could not get a satisfactory answer even after a long time. At last, his realm was invaded and he was defeated by rival forces and he had to flee into the jungle. There he fell into the clutches of a primitive tribe who selected him as a victim to their goddess. While in this precarious condition, he was seen by an ascetic, who rescued him and took him to his quiet hermitage where he and his students tended him lovingly back to health and happiness. Then he discovered the answers to his questions: the best among men is he who has compassion; the most blessed time is the 'present', this very second, and the best act is to relieve pain and grief. You decide to start Namasmarana 'next Thursday', as if Death has assured you in writing that he

will not call on you till that date. Do not postpone what you can do today, now, this very moment. **(070966)**

Even if you falter in the adoration of God, do not falter in the service of the living God, who has assumed human shape and is moving all around you in such large numbers and wearing such manifold costumes of apparel and speech! Only those who can pour out compassion to fellow-men can claim a place in the Grace of God. This is also the highest spiritual discipline; it impresses on you the unity of the human community and the glory of God's immanence. **(251270)**

The Upanishads were not composed or collected by persons who craved fame or fortune; nor are they the vapourings of idlers and scribblers. They have the true ring of actual experience. They arose out of compassion for others wandering in the wilderness, out of concentration on the means of liberation from the dual chain of tears and triumph. Those upon whom the people are traditionally depending for guidance have become callous, forgetting their task, or involved in darkness and dialectics. So, there is the need to spread the message of Love, which is the message of God. Simplicity is the sign of Divinity. Pomp, paraphernalia, jaw-breaking formulae, abracadabra and dark, mysterious mumblings -- these are alien to the spirit of true religion. These are tricks by which man wants to monopolise or gain God. **(241167)**

A COMPASSIONATE HEART REFLECTS DIVINITY

The physical heart is like a machine with limited scope. The heart with compassion is God. If one has no compassion his nature is devilish. Compassion is the most essential quality of a human being. Without compassion, man is 'inhuman'. A compassionate heart reflects Divinity. **(190993)**

When the heart is filled with compassion, the hands are dedicated to the service of others, the body is engaged in constant help to others, the life of such a person is sacred, purposeful and noble. **(231193)**

Giving up narrow ideas and feelings, people should show compassion towards their fellow beings. Compassion is the hallmark of devotion. No one could hope to please God without showing compassion towards his fellow men. A loving heart is the temple of God -- God cannot dwell in a heart without compassion. If one has a compassionate heart, is truthful in speech, and uses his body for serving others, he needs nothing else to redeem his life. **(200396)**

The heart is called 'Hridaya'. It is made up of the two words, 'Hri' and 'Daya' (compassion). The Lord is described as 'Hridayavaasi', the Indweller in the heart. Love and compassion are inherent in every person. Each has to share this love with others. Failure to share one's love is gross ingratitude to society, to which one owes

everything. One should give one's love freely to others and receive love in return. This is the deep significance of human life. *(050694)*

EVERY HEART IS FILLED WITH COMPASSION

Every man has a heart. Every heart is filled with compassion. However, how many choose to share this compassion with others? Sharing the compassion in one's heart with ten others has been characterised as devotion. One who does not share his compassion with others cannot be called a human being. Today the human heart that should be full of compassion has become stone-hard. This is man's misfortune. What is the reason? It is because the heart is filled with the bitterness of differences of caste, creed and nationality that it has become stony. All human beings belong to one caste, one community, one nation. All are embodiments of the Divine. Krishna declared in the Gita: "All beings in the world are a fragment of Myself". It is tragic that man should forget his divine essence and behave like a demon. *(200396)*

Compassion is inherent in every human being. But few are prepared to share this with their fellow beings. Man is deluded by the trivial pleasures from mundane things and is filled with greed and lust. This is the main obstacle in the spiritual path. *(191093)*

HOW TO DEVELOP COMPASSION

Consider love as the Atma itself. However many scriptures you may read and however many spiritual exercises you may do, if you do not allow your heart to melt with compassion your life will be a sheer waste. All practices have to be directed towards softening your heart so that it will flow with kindness and love. Develop this feeling of compassion and allow it to flow fully and spread among all the peoples of the world. *(300387)*

Expand your hearts; enlarge your vision; enlarge the circle of kinship; take more and more of your fellow beings into the tabernacle of your hearts. And, adore them in loving worship. Wisdom is only compassion at its highest, for, through sympathy you enter the heart of another and understand him through and through; you go behind the veil of pretence and punditry, convention and custom; you go behind good manners and fashion that people put on, to hide their agony and ignorance from the rest of the world. Finding the unity in this diversity of roles is true wisdom. *(230271)*

The doctors among you can serve the poor by treating them without insisting on payment; give the poor all the attention and care that you lavish on the rich, paying patients. Do it for the sake of God; feel that it is the Puja (ritual worship) you are offering Him. The lawyers among you can help those who, for want of a skilled advocate, have to go undefended or have to suffer at the hands of unscrupulous men. Do not publish these acts of sympathy; do them spontaneously without fanfare. That

is more precious than demonstrating your service with the help of headlines and photographs. These reduce the worth of the deeds of compassion. You must be uncomfortable, when those around you are unhappy; when you ease their discomfort, you are making them happy and making yourself happy, don't you? Similarly, you must be happy, when those around you are happy. This is more difficult than the previous one, but it is the sign of the truly good. It is your duty to recognize all men as your kin and to share your skill with others so that the maximum benefits accrue therefrom. The skill is a trust, which must rescue all. Service done in homes for the disabled, the defectives, the feeble minded, the delinquents, the orphans, the refugees is indeed very beneficial and a good Sadhana (spiritual practice). So too, in jails and hospitals. Visit these places often, give solace in strength; light the lamp of devotion in the inmates. Do Bhajan; help them to write to their homes; give them books for reading or read books for them; be the kith and kin of those who have none whom they call their own. Your smile will be a lighted candle in their darkness.(201267)

Have constructive thoughts, consoling words, compassionate acts. Be on the lookout for eyes filled with tears, hearts heaving in sighing. I am sure My words will give you the strength of elephants when you need it to carry you through these tasks of service.

Your duty is to yearn for the attainment of the consciousness of the One, behind all this apparent multiplicity. Be centres of love, compassion, service, mutual tolerance, and be happy, very, very happy. That is the blessing I shower on you, this Guru Pournima. (080771)