



How to Develop Compassion

Generally, the word “compassion” implies a blend of sympathy, mercy, pity, and love. The ideal form of true compassion, however, is Divine. God is, in fact, described as *karunasagar*—the Ocean of Compassion.

While sympathy, pity, mercy, and similar qualities sometimes connote the presence of a superiority complex, real compassion is devoid of any egoistic vision. Granted, it is better to express pity (even if backed by egoistic vision) than to manifest cruelty through one’s deeds. However, an aspirant should discern the vast difference between the quality of pity and the virtue of compassion.

One who expresses pity through a sense of superiority intensifies his ignorance; while the pitied one is humiliated in the eyes of their own reason. Remember that every human being is essentially Divine. Therefore, your kindness should not be based on the illusion that you are all-important to some who you think cannot survive without you.

On the other hand, the giver of true compassion and the receiver both become elevated. It is a reciprocation of the spiritual affirmation that God dwells in all. Compassion arising from the ego-transcending dimension of one’s conscious-

ness then aids the spiritual life of others as well. It depends on the revelation of the inner majesty of the Divine Self. It is the fragrance of the flower of Divine Love and does not depend on circumstances.

Therefore, the compassion of a Sage is not dependent on him being surrounded by miserable people. Rather, it is his very nature. Like fragrance emanating from a flower, or moonlight radiating from the moon, a Sage radiates compassion in his surroundings.

Melt Your Stony Heart

As long as your heart is filled with cruelty and gross indifference towards the misery of others, you cannot enshrine God within it. So, allow your heart to melt with the gentle rays of compassion. Then can you flow out of the prison bars of your personality and commune with the Universal Self.

On one hand, people are very kind and compassionate towards their near and dear relatives and can be very generous towards those they are attached to. But beyond the limited circle of egoistic relationships, they are insensitive to others' needs. Realize that you belong to the whole universe and not the confines of a limited vision of family and friends. However, this universal feeling does not imply a cruel indifference towards your relatives. Rather, it enables you to be more profound, sincere and effective for them as you learn to overstep your egoistic barriers.

Regular practice of purifying selfless service, good association, repetition of *mantra* with feeling, inward surrender, and constant reflection on the nature of the Self enables you to melt even the stoniest of hearts and unfold the grandeur of universal life.

When the impressions of anger, hatred, pride, cruelty, and greed gradually dissolve with the positive impressions of love, compassion, humility, and generosity, the inner stream of life communes with Universal Life. Therefore, a Sage becomes a fountain-source of inspiration to all around him.

Classic Examples of Compassion

Sage Valmiki was a robber in his early days. Through the influence of great Sages, he changed his habits and became a devotee of Lord Rama. After prolonged practice of devotion and *samadhi*, he emerged a totally transformed personality. He, who had been so insensitive to others' miseries, became so soft and compassionate. So much so, that when he saw a bird separated from her mate by the cruel arrow of a hunter, the event triggered such an upsurge of compassion that it mirrored the miseries of all beings. Urged by this compassionate feeling, he composed a marvelous poetic work, the Ramayana, abounding with amazing literary excellence, poetic sublimity and mystic insight. The Ramayana contains both the story of Lord Rama and Yoga Vasistha (a voluminous work of classical Vedanta).

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Lord Buddha and Jesus were also embodiments of compassion. They lived only to relieve others of their deep-rooted maladies. Their compassionate acts belong not just to their own age and time, but to all eternity.

Therefore, meditate on the lofty examples of Sages and Saints. Study their teachings, admire their actions, and live in the atmosphere they created by their elevated consciousness.

Patanjali Maharshi says in Raja Yoga: “*Vishoka Va Jyotirshmati*” — “By practicing meditation on the sorrowless minds of Sages, one attains a luminous mind (enters *samadhi*).” By keeping to the ideals of great men and Divine personalities, you can overcome all defects of your human personality and transform into a Divine being.

Compassion as a Spiritual Quality

Raja Yoga teaches you to develop these four qualities: *mudita* (cheerfulness) towards those more spiritually advanced, *maitri* (friendliness) towards one’s equals, *karuna* (compassion) towards those less advanced, and *upeksha* (indifference) towards those who are gross and perverted. Developing these qualities, an aspirant daily maintains a balanced mind while dealing with different personalities. Thus, he progresses on the path of meditation and *samadhi*.

The promotion of *sattwa* (harmony) and the subjugation of *rajas* and *tamas* (distraction and inertia) constitute the basic theme of spiritual discipline. When *sattwa* increases, the Divine quality of compassion unfolds.

When one is disbalanced and eccentrically developed, this Divine quality of the inner Self cannot manifest in one’s thoughts and actions. Egoistic attachment becomes mistaken for tender, Divine love, and selfish actions are mistaken for the selfless service of humanity.

Therefore, bring about integration and balance in your personality through a harmonious blend of wisdom, devotion, meditation, and action in your daily life.

When your heart is purified by the nectarine waters of compassion, you can then commune with

others. Knowing the same Self dwells in all, you will feel others’ sufferings as if they were your own. Realizing others’ misery will not result in empty sorrow, however. Rather, you will flow in a stream of practical action promoting harmony and peace in the world.

Compassion is the gateway to Cosmic Love. It is the fragrance of spiritual wisdom, infused with the light of the mystic dawn heralding the advent of Self-realization.

Be kind and be compassionate. Do not shut yourself from the glorious horizons of Cosmic Expansion by creating prison bars of gross impressions. By yielding to anger, hate, and greed, and by constantly pursuing selfish urges, you unwittingly become like a man who builds a concrete wall only to find himself completely enclosed in a mausoleum of his own making.

Therefore, be compassionate and grow in the image of God. You will be sure to discover your essential nature and become free of the cycles of birth and death.

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