

Value Insight

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Bi-Monthly

COMPASSION

- ▶▶ IS THIS COMPASSION?
- ▶▶ COMPASSION OUTSIDE
THE BOX
- ▶▶ THE JOY OF GIVING



A bi-monthly magazine of
Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV)
Website www.valuefoundation.in



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Value Insight

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Anuradha Khandelwal is a prolific writer. Her love for writing about traditions, current affairs and 'tongue-in cheek' articles on various issues led her to start an online blog on Facebook called 'AnuSpeak'. It gained in popularity and became a hit with a large fan following. Alongside, she also started an online cookery group called 'ANU can COOK so can YOU'. This venture was started more than 10 years ago and is still going strong.

She has been invited to artisanal markets to showcase her work...which is blending spices making relishes. She has also been featured in 'Better India' on Red FM. And asked to give talks in various places.



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Vibhuti Sharma is a professional, working with Onsemi, a semiconductor company based out of Arizona, USA. She has worked for about a decade in India across companies such as Ernst & Young, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Egon Zehnder, before she moved to the US to pursue her Master's in Business Analytics. She is a hands-on mom to a 7-year-old son and writing is one of her interests, in addition to cooking and travelling. She has been practicing Heartfulness Meditation for the last 16 years and is passionate about her spiritual practice which enables her to remain centered while managing her day-to-day activities.

Sadhana and its Pre-requisites

Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha, a well-known exponent of spiritual treasures like Bhagavad Gita, is the head of Narayanashrama Tapovanam, Trichur, Kerala. He has provided inspiration to people across the globe including corporate leaders on ethical practices



Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

... I was speaking about the qualities or qualifications of a seeker. Generally this is called *sāadhanacatuṣṭayam*. The word *catuṣṭayam* means 'four', a combination of four, an aggregate of four. *sāadhanacatuṣṭayam* means *sādhana*.

The word *sādhana* is a striving, a pursuit, a perseverance which will take you to the goal you want to achieve. I would like you to remember a few words which are all derived from the same root. *sādhana*, *sādhya*, *sādhaka*, *siddhi*, and *siddha*. *sādhana* is an effort, a dedicated, consistent, wholesome pursuit. So, one who does *sādhana* is called a *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* ... All of you have come here to undertake and to be with the pursuit. It is not just an

academic study. Everything that you study persuades you to go into your own mind, using the tool of intelligence and bring about whatever transformation is suggested or compelled, by listening to whatever you have listened. When we discuss purity of the mind, we are not discussing purity of the mind as a picture drawn on the sky. Certainly not! ... So when we discuss purity, you understand it and when you understand it, you start making an effort to make your mind after that.

So try to know the impure elements... the very description that it is impure makes it very clear it should have no place in you. An infection in the body – will it have any place in the body? Our system itself tries to subdue it and throw it

away. So infection, by its very nature, is not something acceptable. Even if you don't know it, our body will try to fight against it. Similarly, impure elements are such that they have no place in your system.

The knowledge that these are impure is more than sufficient to launch a pursuit, a dedicated pursuit to get rid of them. Suppose we start discussing impurity and the discussion does not involve your mind and perseverance to get rid of the impure elements, then is it any discussion? We are not discussing an alien subject. How will the sun or the moon look like? What are the contents of the moon? Is there any moisture or water there? It is not that kind of a discussion! This is an evaluation of your own inner personality. This is how the vedantic or spiritual study instantly becomes a *sādhana*.... The question necessarily arises – for what purpose, what is the goal? So the goal is called *sādhya*. That which is to be attained! ...

When you pursue *sādhana* and you are able to achieve, that achievement is called *siddhi*. So, *sādhaka*, *sādhana*, *sādhya* and *siddhi*... What is that? ... it is a wholesome purity

and sublimity, serenity of the mind. Just as you would like to be healthy with good, healthy blood so that you will have the vigour to work effectively, you must have a mind buoyant with enthusiasm, fervour, resolve, inspiration. That is our goal. The mind should become serene, pure and wholesome... When the mind becomes so, automatically, as through the senses, it perceives and reflects the objects without the senses – mark my words – without the senses, mind will not reflect. Reflection is only with regard to external objects. The mind will start revealing and radiating its own essence, namely the self.. In other words, it will be a stage, a state where the mind is freed of all object reflections. When the object reflections are not there, automatically the subject will start revealing and radiating itself. It is the object reflection that conceals the nature of the subject.

Now, the *sādhya* is very clear. In one sense it is purity, in another sense, it is the revelation and radiation of the subject and its nature, glory, splendor. We are seeking pleasure, we are seeking joy from the outside

objects but we are ourselves joyful. Just like fire is hot and brilliant, our own personality, our own consciousness inside, is both knowledge and delight. So you will start knowing yourself and that knowing will be in the nature of a radiation and a radiance. It is not a brilliance seen or shown by the eyes. It is an inner brilliance where the sensory play is not there.

In your dream, no senses, the bodily senses, or the external objects ever come there.

Your mind or consciousness itself produces the entire dream phenomena. And in the dream phenomena, you will find different colourful objects, different types of brilliance and many other items. The one single mind produces all this. What does it mean? The mind is not merely a source to reflect the external objects which are separate from it - the mind also has got the sovereign capacity to produce all objects with all the variety of colours, brilliances and properties by itself.

If our subject is capable of producing all the objects by itself - then what do

you think of the subject. It is something very grand, glorious, magnificent - so the magnificence, the glory, the splendor, the brilliance; all these will start revealing and radiating for you. This is that *sādhya*.

So, I would like you to come to a conclusion yourself. Are you a *sādhaka*, and will you or are you already doing *sādhana*? And is the aim or object clear to you, the *sādhya*? And when are you going to have the *siddhi*? And when will you, the *sādhaka*, become a *siddha*? These are the questions that you should think and find answers for! ...

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru. Jai Guru.

* * *

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SUBHASHITAM

दयां विना देव गुरुक्रमार्चाः
तपांसि सर्वेन्द्रिययन्त्रणानि
दानानि शास्त्राध्ययनानि सर्व
सैन्यं गतस्वामी यथा तथैव ॥

देव और गुरुपूजा, तप, सभी इंद्रियों का नियन्त्रण, दान और
शास्त्राध्ययन - ये सब क्रियाएं दया के बिना वैसे ही शक्तिहीन
हैं, जैसे सेनापति के बिना सेना ।

Worship of God and the Guru, performing austerities, keeping
all senses under control, doing charity and reading scriptures –
all these actions without compassion are as ineffective as an
army without its commander.

From the President's Desk



I often wonder when I pick up *Value Insights* as to how many of the readers go through all the articles in the magazine. The authors of the articles put in enormous energy and with enthusiasm pen their piece. If the response from readers is not equally enthusiastic, whether critical or appreciative, it is sure to impact the contributors. May I therefore request the readers to go through the articles leisurely and whatever comments they want to make they should write to the editor. From the next issue there will definitely be one page for Reader's view.

Readers' views are essential for the magazine also to take a definite course of direction. It is worth mentioning that the articles in their 1000-1500 words just touch the tip of the iceberg, so to say...they are not exhaustive on the topic. They are meant to provoke the interest of the reader, to set the mind thinking. So your response will enrich the contributors, the other readers and strengthen the understanding of FRNV too on our value system.

The question is can we begin a

conversation? Dialogues at many fronts? Each issue of the magazine is focused on one topic and most of the articles relate to that. This is done with a view to providing a kaleidoscopic view of the subject...some ideas may find ready acceptance, some outright rejection and some may be for mulling over. Today multi-participant conversations are going on, on many "instant" modes through social media. At times it is enriching but more often not so. Mere criticism will take us nowhere. Can we raise another powerful platform which emphasizes reflection, thought provoking comments and quotable responses?

I suggest that these topics become conversation starters and subject of discussion and dialogue in the gatherings of our regional chapters and members also.

With the fervent hope that our new meeting place finds your active participation, I wish you all fulfilling days ahead.

S. Regunathan
President (FRNV)



Is this Compassion?

Sudhamahi Regunathan

***The removal of all fear, known as abhayadānam,
is the highest quality, charity, action...
the supreme manifestation of compassion.***

*With rising waves lashing the shores, the turbulent sea rumbled
The quiet moonlit night aided the spread of its roar
But the huge mansions and trees on its banks stood unmoving,
They had not a bit of fear,
The reason for which was the sea itself
For it
Never transgresses its limits.*

The verse was composed by Acharya Mahapragya as he sat watching the sea at a place called Dholawad in Maharashtra. In the words of this poem he captures the deathly silence of fear by its absence... it is

unworded... yet it reverbrates... is this called compassion?

Compassion is interchangeably called *daya*, *anukampa*, *karunya*, *dana* or *maitri* and each term has its

own specific connotations and some overlapping commonality. Essentially they all indicate an empathy with the other, a close quarter appreciation of the other's pains, being moved by it, alleviating it either by service or by donating something and nurturing a universal love towards all. Compassion is used to represent any of the above ideas or a combination of them. Compassion is a sentiment common to all faiths for it forms the very basis of faith. Their expression is varied, their perspective multi-dimensional. In Jainism, the removal of all fear, known as *abhayadānam*, is the highest quality, charity, action...the supreme manifestation of compassion.

What causes fear? A feeling of not being good enough, a feeling of insecurity, ignorance of the rules that operate in the world, the possibility of losing possessions in terms of material wealth or relationships, the apprehension of being called to own up for a wrong, a revengeful enemy, the crying ache of lust. All these feelings cause or bring in their wake, exploitation. And this gives birth to fear.

Therefore the Jainas believe that to remove fear in all beings is the highest act of compassion. They have identified five principles which can help remove fear and enhance compassion. The five principles take the form of the five vows or *mahavratas* that a monk or nun takes when he or she is initiated into the fold:

Ahimsa: non-violence, causing no harm.

Aparigraha: non possessiveness not only about material possessions but even about ideas.

Achautya: not stealing, not coveting.

Brahmacharya: overcoming lust.

Asatya: to refrain from speaking untruth.

On taking and following these five vows, *karunya* or *daya* or *anukampa* begin to manifest. It is thus associated with *samyak drishti* or the right perspective.

The interesting thing is that each of these principles is followed for purifying one's own soul, but the route taken is through social action... right perspective, right knowledge and right conduct. Jainism integrates personal goals

with harmonious living. The reason why dispelling fear is considered paramount is because every soul lodged in an insect, plant or human is equal and has a soul which desires to live:



Savvism jiviyam piyam
To each, his life is dear

Therefore one finds many *goshalas* and bird hospitals set up by Jainas. They have been leaders in setting up medical services for animals. Since the Jaina idea of compassion goes beyond human life to all living beings, they cover their mouth, lest they harm some air bodies, walk barefoot, to minimise the harm they may cause to a small being like an ant... this defines many features of their lifestyle. Though this is contained in their concept of *ahimsa*, it is, in my opinion, more than *ahimsa* for it is an understanding and a true appreciation of other life... it is not limited to just refraining from

doing harm, it moves further to allow for an environment where the other too can flourish.

The subtle difference in understanding compassion in the Jaina world arises because it talks about compassion at the level of the soul. To recognize that one should not cause fear and that everyone should be able to live free, indicates an understanding of the equality of one soul with other souls. And souls look after each other's interest.

Parasparo upagraho jivanam
Souls render service to one another

It is not surprising that Acharya Bhikshu, the founder of the Shwetambar Terapanth sect differentiated further between two kinds of compassion: worldly compassion or *laukika daya* and spiritual compassion, *lokkottara*. *Laukika daya* is that which pertains to worldly affairs - the rich help the have-nots with donations, charity and other philanthropic activities. In India the Jains are among the highest donors and managers of charities and charitable institutions.

The other type of compassion called *Lokottara daya*, or other worldly

compassion, steers people to the path of rectitude. Monks and nuns who have taken the five vows are expected to have compassion which leads them to guide people to a life of rectitude by showing them the right path thereby helping them to reduce the bad karmas that they could have acquired.

The core act involved in this kind of compassion is to spread the word of restraint - do not be led by temptation to commit remissions such that you fall low in the type of birth you may get in the next birth and lose all the merits you have so far acquired. Generally monks and nuns are the ones to direct the erring followers, sometimes it can happen the other way round too as told in the following story:

A monk after several years of severe penance was practising restraint while living in a prostitute's house. It did not last. Soon he fell prey to her whims. She asked him for an expensive shawl. He managed to get a king to donate it to him, for a monk has no possessions. The temptress

wiped her mud-soiled feet on the expensive blanket when the monk gifted it to her. As the monk was aghast, the woman explained, "I threw away just a blanket, you are throwing away all your years of penance and restraint..." The monk realized his folly and in repentance of his conduct went back to his fold to make amends and reach higher echelons of spiritual progress.

Those who show compassion of this nature are indeed showing the highest form of compassion.

I end with another poem of Acharya Mahapragya where he says to dispel fear is the ultimate spiritual aim, to understand and be sensitive to the causes of pain is the true measure and to see the other soul as equal to your own, the true realization:

*Look! The painter's brush has
drawn a moon ray in darkness pitch
Frightened was I, seeing the
dazzling expression of lightning
from the mute
But to fearlessly mix nectar in
poison alone is the true mixture...*

Compassion outside the box

Anuradha Khandelwal

A Smile, a Compliment, a Hug, a little gift...



Compassion is not something that is new....it has been emphasized by all cultures throughout history ...kindness, empathy, generosity, are some of the words that come to my mind. But first of all it is very important to have self-compassion. Now you might ask what that is precisely.

Self-compassion involves being kind and understanding towards oneself, especially during times of difficulty or failure. It involves treating oneself with the same kindness and care that one would offer to a friend. In simple lingo it means being kind in thought word and deed to yourself!

Compassion to others is being aware of the suffering of others and trying to take action to alleviate it. Of

course it is not possible always...otherwise we would all have halos around us!!...but we can try. Listening to somebody without being judgmental is also an act of compassion. It is so easy to not listen and form judgments on hearsay...In today's world where we all have become glued to our phones and are not willing to listen to anyone...and to prove a point we cut a person off midway and check Google to state that we are right!! That lacks compassion. ! We so easily dismiss the other person's point of view....so we basically end up being unkind!

Laughter is the best medicine...and we all know it. A fun way to practice compassion is through humor. Laughter is a universal language that can bring people together and ease tension. When we approach a

difficult situation with humor, it can help us cope and see things in a new light. Just be sure to keep it appropriate and respectful.

A smile, a hug, a compliment, a little gift, sharing a meal, all means you have compassion. Acts of kindness can help spread joy and you will feel warm and fuzzy in your heart too! Step out of your comfort zone



once in a while...smile and help strangers ...spread the positivity... because putting in some effort for someone else to feel good can be

very rewarding. Step out and make a difference!

Research has shown that compassion has a range of benefits for both the giver and the receiver. Studies have found that people who show compassion are more likely to experience positive emotions such as happiness, contentment, and joy. It can also improve relationships and create a sense of connection and belonging.

On the other hand, those who receive compassion are more likely to experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. They also tend to have a greater sense of well-being and resilience. And all this means a better world for the future generations.

Compassion doesn't have to be serious or somber. It can be playful, silly, and even goofy. So, the next time you want to show someone you care, think outside the box and inject some fun into the mix. Who knows, it may be just the thing they need to brighten their day and spread a little joy around. A 10 letter word...with so much weight!

So put that phone away and listen
Shut the phone and watch And
please ACT!

We are slowly forgetting this 10
letter super power word....

It has the ability to connect people, heal relationships and improve mental and emotional health...

By cultivating compassion we can create a better world for future generations. So let's all begin to show some compassion to ourselves and the others around us. The

environment around us. For a better world for our children to inherit.

Enough of teaching young people to make money...let's teach them to be kind compassionate human beings...tolerant, caring, aware and willing to take action!



Courtesy : Dhriti Baruah

Compassion is not relegated to human beings only. Animals have compassion and show it to their own species but often shower it on other species too.

Elephants are known to mourn their dead and even show empathy to their distressed mates by comforting them with their trunks. The same goes for chimpanzees.

Dogs have been friends for humans forever, and the compassion they show to their masters...the understanding and the bond that they create is something so tender that it warms the heart and makes me wonder why we are humans not

learning from them. Even predators like lions and tigers are known to adopt cubs and show compassion.

Recently a video went viral where a baboon takes care of a lion cub with such love and compassion. These observations remind us that compassion is a universal trait that transcends species boundaries, and can bring us closer to understanding the complexity and richness of the animal kingdom.



The Joy of Giving

Sanjay Joshi

*When we take action to make
someone feel better it enhances
our joy and fulfils the soul.*

This is compassion. ..the joy of giving.



We all enjoy feeling good and happy. A small child is happy to receive a toffee, a young girl a pretty dress or a toy, a growing boy perhaps a gadget, a young couple will be happy to receive an offer for a romantic “dinner-for-two” and an octogenarian mother is happy to receive her pension on time. It appears that feeling good is associated with “receiving”, that when we receive, we will feel happy and good. However, even simple things like speaking politely and respectfully to your building guard or your housemaid, holding the hand of an old person to help cross the road or lending a patient ear to the woes and sufferings of a friend or relative and ameliorating her predicament can give us a “good feeling.” When we receive a gift it is something that

satisfies our senses and complements our materialistic desires. While, when we give, contribute, and take action to make someone feel better from the existing state, it enhances our joy and fulfils the soul. This is compassion. The Joy of Giving.

I recall an episode when a sponsor approached me. This person who did not have a daughter wanted to help an orphan girl fulfil her desire to complete her education and help her stand on her own feet.





This sponsor had heard about my profession at a children's home that provided long term care and development facilities including shelter, food, clothing, and education to needy and neglected children. This person approached me and wanted to support a girl succeed in life.

A girl child was identified and selected, and she was supported by this person to receive education in a private school of Delhi NCR. The girl was an average student and often not able to cope with the academic rigours of a private educational institution. The sponsor was mindful of little things that mattered in the life of an orphan girl. This person would occasionally visit the children's home, bring presents on the child's birthday and motivate and make her feel special. A facility of a tutor was arranged for the child to support her in academics and gradually the child started to show interest and excelled. In due course of time the girl completed her education till 12th standard with satisfactory grades.

By this time, 6 years of sponsorship and mentoring by the sponsor was

completed and the girl had turned 18 years. A child living in a Children's Home normally leaves the long-term care institution on becoming an adult. When the sponsor came to know of this it distressed the person. The sponsor wanted to continue the financial and mentorship support to the young girl who wanted to pursue a course in Paramedics or Nursing and become a Nurse.

The sponsor did some research and made enquiries on Nursing schools and colleges in the Delhi NCR. Finally, after some time, the young girl was admitted to a Nursing school in Haryana under the 3-year General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) course. The sponsor arranged the hostel arrangement, tuition fees and academic accessories for the young girl.

An altruistic bond had developed between the young girl and the sponsor who continued to visit the girl and provided full support including mentoring and guidance. The young girl cleared all her semesters with good marks and secured a job of an Assistant Nurse in an hospital. We all were happy to see her succeed and witness the



transformative journey of the young girl.

It was compassion that made it happen. The sponsor showed empathy and took several focused actions to reduce the suffering of the beneficiary and contributed to not only help her succeed in her academic life but also facilitated her to stand on her own feet without any expectation from the beneficiary. Compassion is therefore more than empathy; compassion calls for affirmative action in the interest of the person being supported.

In a changing and somewhat crumbling social structure today, where selfishness and ego-centric behavior seems to be dominating, it is values like Compassion that will help us become tolerant and sensitive to the needs of others.

In general, we associate compassion as an action associated towards the other person. But it is equally important to know that compassion is inward oriented as well. That is, treating yourself with kindness when

you make mistakes. One should avoid judging oneself for the errors and blunders that one encounters in life. A mistake is a mistake, and one needs to get over it as early as possible. What is important is not to repeat it. It is no use criticizing or blaming oneself, rather the sooner you overcome it the better it is. Self-Compassion is very useful trait that can be medicinal. Another action that has been found impactful is Mindful Meditation: where one can focus on kind, loving and caring life experiences to improve one's situation.

Therefore, compassion can easily be nurtured and acquired. It has practical benefits too as it enables us to understand ourselves in a better light. Compassion softens our behavior and makes us mindful. Genuinely respecting another person without being judgmental sets in a purging impact on our personality. Research has shown that people who are genuinely compassionate and kind are happier with their lives and possess a healthy physical and mental disposition.



*There is a bond that we have as human beings...
innate compassion. It is "The greatest form of love
humans have to offer." (Rachel Joy Scot)*

According to Darwin's '*Explanation of Emotion in Man and Animals*' compassion is an evolved part of human nature rooted in our brain and biology and ready to be cultivated - a compassionate instinct. However, although we are biologically set up to be compassionate it needs to be practiced to acquire compassion, i.e., just as we are biologically set up to walk and talk, it takes experience to get that ability.

The three core elements of compassion are: mindfulness, self-



kindness and common humanity.

Neuroscientists in Emory University, USA, recorded the brain activity of participants while they were given a chance to help someone. It was observed that this



Compassion...
can only attain its
full breadth and
depth if it embraces
all living creatures
and does not limit
itself to mankind
- Albert Schweitzer

triggered activity in portions of the brain when people experience, pleasure thus proving that helping others brought about the same pleasure we get from the



gratification of personal desire.

Then there is an oxytocin, a hormone

Envisioning a
relationship with
the wider world
i n s p i r e s
compassionate
thinking. It gives
one a connection to
the wider world.

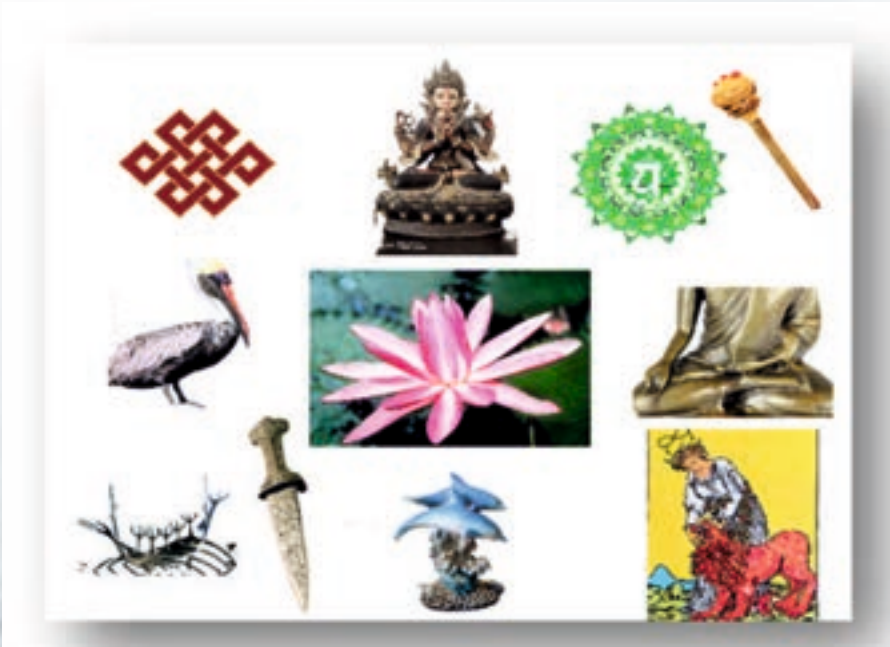


in our bloodstream. A mother's caress or a friendly gesture like a pat on the back can trigger the release of oxytocin bringing about feelings of warmth and pleasure. Studies show that it promotes a kind of nurturing behavior. Especially in mothers. Motherhood awakens a depth of sensitivity and empathy. Kind and friendly gestures can produce more oxytocin. This proves that compassion is self-perpetuating. It causes a chemical reaction that motivates us to be even more compassionate.



Symbols of Compassion

Every culture has its own set of symbols representing ideologies and concepts. However, certain symbols are common across the globe.



The most common symbol across the globe is the heart symbol. The heart is regarded as the center of human emotions and seat of the soul thus it represents love and compassion. Today, a popular and frequently used symbol is the emoji, used online to express emotions. In 2020, during the pandemic, Facebook launched a new emoji hugging a heart so people

could use it to express empathy for one another during the lockdown days of isolation. And then there are certain symbols or images of a particular culture or religion.

Tara is a female deity worshipped in both Hinduism and Buddhism. She personifies compassion. She is said to have been born of empathy for the

suffering world and is invoked for protection, guidance and deliverance from difficult situations. In Hinduism she is a form of the female primordial energy known as Shakti.

Buddhists have hand *mudras*. The *Varada Mudra* has the hanging of the left hand with a front facing palm and extended fingers. This mudra represents generosity, compassion and devotion towards the salvation of humans.

The red or pink Lotus is greatly respected as it is known to rise from murky waters yet it flourishes to produce a beautiful flower. A specific color represents a specific quality. The red or pink lotus represents love and compassion.

The Endless Knot represents the unification of all that exists and the coming together of enlightenment, wisdom, compassion. It is an auspicious sign of Buddha. The origin of the symbol is said to date as far back as 2500 BC in the Indus Valley Civilization. It is conjectured that the endless knot symbol may have evolved from an ancient Naga symbol with two stylized snakes. The dagger. Abrahamic traditions believe that the archangel Zadkiel, in charge of freedom, mercy and

benevolence, was sent by god to Abraham to tell him that he did not have to sacrifice his son Isaac. The archangel is depicted with him holding a dagger similar to the one Abraham almost used on Isaac. This symbol is viewed as a representation of compassion.

The Pelican. This strange bird is used in Christianity to symbolize sacrifice, kindness and compassion. The pelican bird is said to pierce its own breast to provide blood if its chicks are starving. This myth arose from the fact that during the breeding season the birds' beaks turn a bright red.

Ananahata Chakra. Chakras are different points in the human body through which universal energy is believed to flow. The fourth chakra known as the anahata is located near the heart. Based on its proximity to the heart, it represents all the positive emotional states namely, love, balance, empathy, compassion, purity...

In West Africa symbols known as adinkra are displayed on structures, artwork and clothing. One of them, obaatan awaamu is portrayed as a butterfly and is representative of comfort, and assurance that comes

with a mother's love and embrace. It is believed to be capable of giving peace to a troubled soul.

The Hringhorni in Norse mythology is the greatest ship ever built in Norse mythology. It is a symbol of Baldur, son of Odin. The ship is a symbol of kindness because Baldu was considered the most beautiful and kindest of all the gods.

In Rome the scepter became a symbol of compassion because Clementia, the Roman goddess of clemency, forgiveness and compassion is depicted with a sceptre.

In Europe the tarot card representing strength depicts a woman stroking a lion. This representation is meant to

showcase that even the wildest power can be tamed by the strength of love and compassion.

The Koru Aihe is a Maori symbol in the form of a dolphin that represents harmony, playfulness and kindness. The Maori people believe that dolphins are manifestations of gods appearing to help sailors navigate in stormy weather through treacherous waters.

The Raven is common across cultures and their depiction can be either positive or negative. However, in Japan, ravens are seen as symbols of compassion because when a raven grows up it usually helps its parents to take care of its younger siblings. In some cultures they are also seen as messengers of the divine.





Courtesy : Dhriti Baruah

The Heart of Compassion

Prema Raghavan

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ १२-१३॥

*“He who has let go of hatred, who treats all beings with kindness
and compassion, who is always serene,
unmoved by pain or pleasure, free of the 'I' and 'mine',
self-controlled, firm, and patient, his whole mind focused on me-
that is the man I love best.”*

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical, and spiritual traditions, calling us to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion comes into the English language by way of the Latin root 'passio', means to suffer, paired with the Latin prefix 'com', meaning together – to suffer together. This emotion is the feeling

that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering.

Kristin Neff has defined compassion as being composed of three main elements – self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Compassion entails being warm towards oneself when encountering

pain and personal shortcomings, rather than ignoring them or hurting oneself with self-criticism. From this stems empathy and awareness, the other two legs on which compassion stands.

Three shades of compassion

Familial compassion

I was working in a school as a volunteer four decades ago. There is an incident from that time that remains etched in my memory. There was a lady who did the cleaning at the school with a deep sense of serene devotion. One day I noticed a pang of anxiety on her face. Her younger brother had fallen off a tree in their village in Ratnagiri and was paralyzed. She had brought him to Bombay for treatment, where after a series of tests and examinations, he was diagnosed as paraplegic with no recovery options. He would need to be wheeled for the rest of his life. She was arranging for his return home, disappointed at not being able to do anything for her brother. I got her a wheelchair that they took along on their return trip home. His parents were pained to see him, unable to fathom how his legs, that appeared free from external injury, could no longer work. The imperceptible nature of spinal injuries made the

whole situation seem like a bad dream. Within a few weeks of his return, her brother passed away, almost like he had returned just to spend his difficult last days in his home, with his parents.

Lakshmi had pledged her gold to pay for her brother's brief travel to the city and unsuccessful treatment. Instead of selling the wheelchair to defray some of those costs, she had given it to an elderly neighbour in the village who was no longer mobile. She did her best for her brother and donated what was no longer required to someone who could use it. This is the arithmetic of compassion, led by the heart.

Familial compassion

My sister runs a hospital in Chennai. When the young husband of one of the doctors suffered a kidney failure, an older lady colleague spontaneously offered to donate her kidney to save his life and protect the integrity of a young family with small children. The inspiring human spirit of community is revealed by such random acts of kindness that are more common than we realize.

Stranger compassion

A common sight behind auto

rickshaws in the south is one that states, 'We provide free service to pregnant ladies going to the hospital'. The pandemic brought out in full force the natural willingness with which people reach out to help others in need.

Inculcating compassion

Teaching children compassion is a vital part of their learning journey – and a skill that will help them throughout their life.

Narmada

As a school girl, I had a friend called Narmada who was affected by polio. Some children showed empathy in assisting her to climb the stairs. But many others called her a cripple. Narmada felt hurt one day and cried. She said this was the third school she had moved to and did not want to come here from tomorrow too, due to the taunts. We listened with attention, without judgment and requested her not to leave the school as we were her good friends. Our positive actions, team spirit, perseverance and warmth won the day. Narmada continued in the same school. Her parents came to school the very next day to acknowledge our efforts and distributed sweets as a celebration. The other girls also learned their lesson on compassion.

Practicing compassion

The ability to recognize others emotions and be responsive to them is important to building a healthy environment at home and at work. Compassion skills include empathy, communication, and decisiveness. A compassionate person asks questions, listens to others, and is open to new ideas.

Being compassionate can improve health, well-being, and relationships. Many scientists believe that compassion may even be



vital to the survival of our species. Research has shown that when we feel compassion, the 'bonding hormone' oxytocin, and regions of

the brain linked to empathy, caregiving, and pleasure light up, which often results in our wanting to approach and care for other people.

I conclude with the golden words of E.B. White's [beautiful case for keeping faith in the human spirit](#), for *“as long as there is one upright*

man, as long as there is one compassionate woman, the contagion may spread to the whole of humanity.”

As the Dalai Lama said, compassion is a necessity without which humanity cannot survive.

Activities and Exercises

1. I often took my kids along with me to the orphanage and handicapped institutions where I was a volunteer. We celebrated their English calendar birthdays at home with friends and relatives and did poor feeding in the slums on their Tamil star birthdays.
2. My children grew up reading 'Amar Chitra Katha' books, where the stories steeped in Indian culture fascinated them. The subliminal undercurrent of compassion and nobility that pervaded these stories had an indelible influence on them.
3. One of our relatives died young and his kids were of the same age as mine. We spent a lot of time with them leading to my children forging a close bond with their family. Exposure to the inevitable life experiences of loss, and the ability for it to coexist with the innocent joys of childhood, leads to an authentic and natural sense of empathy and acceptance.
4. Embody compassion, since children pick up who you are and how you act over your own advice and instructions to them.



Hand in Hand

Vibhuti Sharma

*Sympathy, Empathy,
Compassion*

As Dalai Lama rightly said, “Love and Compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive.” Compassion and the ability to love is what makes us human. Compassion is intrinsic to a being, it needs to be the quality of the heart, manifesting as a way of life, bringing about a radical change in this world. Be it for our fellow brothers and sisters, animals, plants, or for our ourselves, empathy and kindness are the beads of the string that unite us all.

We have all emerged from the same source but it is unfortunate that as we grow older we gradually start losing touch with the pristine source of light and joy that is present in our hearts. As we get more and more involved in day to day affairs of worldly life, competing for power, position and money, the humane tendencies of compassion, kindness, generosity and empathy take a back seat.

If we look around us, we can learn a lot from Nature. Fruit trees give us juicy fruits without expecting anything in return, the shade of a tall tree is always available to passers-by, whenever they wish to rest. Nature is always giving, desireless of any rewards or recognition. It is an epitome of selflessness and selflessness breeds compassion. *“In compassion, when we feel with the other, we dethrone ourselves from the center of our world and we put another person there.”*

Karen Armstrong

One can begin by practicing selflessness at home. Practicing the art of putting other's before oneself in a household goes a long way in incorporating a similar attitude as we expand the circle of our dealings with people around us. Gradually, we can expand the realms of our empathy and compassion by having

reverance for all forms of life, including people known and unknown to us. We must not be selective in the expression of kindness and compassion, on the contrary it should spring naturally for each and every creature.

A compassionate heart, is a healing heart and such hearts are needed to mitigate the pain and suffering that exists in the world today. In this era of selfish existence where at times men may stoop to very low levels in the drive to achieve what they desire, a compassionate being always stands apart. As we give more and more power to the tendencies of anger, hatred, avarice and jealousy we know we are all headed toward disaster and what is needed to change this world's fate are beings whose hearts are brimming with love and empathy.

Just like words can be mightier than the sword, loving and merciful hearts can change the vibrations of this world. Whenever in doubt, we must choose the side of kindness and empathy for we do not know what the other person may be going through. Give the other person the benefit of doubt and move ahead with compassion. It may mean nothing to some, yet what you do could mean the world to them.

I would like to share a short story

about kindness that is very close to my heart. There once was a Scottish farmer who was working on his farm when he heard a cry. He dropped his tools and ran in the direction of the sound. Shocked, he found a boy buried upto his waist in muck shouting for help. The farmer saved the boy in the nick of time. The next day, a carriage stopped by the farmer's house and a man stepped down, introducing himself as the father of the boy whose life the farmer had saved. The rich man had come to express his gratitude to the farmer and wished to repay him in some way. When the farmer refused accepting any form of payment for what he considered to be just a common act of kindness, the rich man offered to provide for the farmer's son's education. In time, the farmer's son graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London and became famous throughout the world as Alexander Fleming, the one who discovered the life-saving drug Penicillin. As fate would have it, many years later, the rich man's son fell sick with pneumonia and what saved him was Penicillin and the rich man's son was none other than Sir Winston Churchill.

"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions and the roots spring up and make new trees."

The Common Core of Humanity

Akhil Gupta

At the core of all religions is the belief that our true purpose as human beings on Earth is to demonstrate compassion in thought and action toward all living beings.

Too often we reserve compassion for members of our own groups only. But there is a common core of humanity underlying our wonderful diversity.

My own upbringing in India's pluralistic society illustrated the truth of this common core of humanity and enabled me to participate in so much of the religious and spiritual lives of others, treating every such interaction as an opportunity to explore and learn-from across a spectrum of religions and sub-sects.

Religion has been a source of tremendous spiritual resources, providing values and meaning to its faithful with an emphasis on neighborliness and compassion. The common message of religious revelations is one that

celebrates our common humanity and calls for action and service that promotes love, compassion, and peace in the world.

Confucianism

“A heart of compassion is the seed of Humanity.”

-Mencius,
Confucian philosopher



Courtesy :
Dhriti Baruah

Buddhism

“All major religious traditions carry basically the same message, that is love, compassion and forgiveness [...] the important thing is they should be part of our daily lives.

*-The Dalai Lama,
Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader*

Baha'i

“It is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved God must treat with mercy and compassion, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature.”

Abdul-Baha, Bahai leader

Judaism

“The Holy One then said: Because you showed such compassion in tending the flock of a mortal, as you live, you shall become shepherd of Israel, the flock that is Mine.”

*Sefer Ha-Aggadah,
collection of Jewish writings*

Hinduism

“Realize the truth of the scriptures; learn to be detached and to take joy in renunciation. Do not get angry or harm any living creature, but be compassionate and gentle; show good will to all.”

*-The Bhagavad Gita (16:1-2),
Hindu text*

*From Speaking Tree in India. TOI August 20, 2022
Akhil Gupta, The writer is former CMD Blackstone India, and founder
and director of Universal Enlightenment and Flourishing.*



Swami Vivekananda

The Universal man

S. Regunathan



Dramatic Encounters

The first meeting of Sri Ramakrishna and Narendra was significant in more ways than one. The master instantly recognized the great spiritual potential of the disciple who had come with a restless mind. And the prospective disciple, though at first considered Sri Ramakrishna to be a quirky person, soon realized that he would be the answer to his search for Truth.

Narendra went to meet Sri Ramakrishna with a few of his friends who were not on the same level of spiritual attainment as Narendra, but nevertheless, shared his curiosity. Narendra, when asked to sing by the guru, sang the Brahmo song and the master was ecstatic. After the song was over, Sri Ramakrishna suddenly rose and took Naren by hand into the adjacent room, and shut the door. Narendra thought he was going to get some special instruction on spirituality. On the contrary, the master held his hand and started weeping saying, “How I yearn to unburden my mind to one who can appreciate my innermost

experience.” With his hands folded he began to address him saying, “You are the ancient sage Nara, the incarnation of Narayana.” and went on sobbing.

Narendra was shocked and taken aback by this behavior. He had the same feeling as one would have when encountering a man, who was stark raving mad. Though he took leave of Sri Ramakrishna with confused thoughts and mixed impressions, he could not stop coming back to him. The next visit took place after a month and the incident that took place then unhinged Narendra completely from Brahmosamaj.

All Brahmosamajis held the view that Hinduism was monotheistic and that God is personal and formless. However, after Ramakrishna's touch, Narendra moved towards Advaita Vedanta. In fact this was something very drastic for Narendra was against the Vedantic belief that there is one reality which is impersonal and formless. And later on, he also believed impersonal

Brahman and also of the personal god. To him it was Sakti or Kali.

The incident that brought about this revolutionary change spanned out as follows; on the second visit Narendra went straight to Sri Ramakrishna's room and found him sitting alone in his room. He was happy to see him. But then something very drastic happened. In a trice, Sri Ramakrishna put his right foot on Vivekananda. Even as he was taken aback, the whole thing gave him an extraordinary experience. To Narendra, with his eyes open, everything in the room vanished and the whole universe merged with his individuality. He felt a mysterious void. He was totally shocked and out of fear shouted, "What were you doing to me? I have my parents to take care of, lots of duties to perform..."

On hearing him Ramakrishna laughed and said, "Now you rest." and immediately the novel experience vanished. Narendra said that he felt he was sitting in the room, all else was like a magical experience. He could not believe what he had been through. He could also not fathom what it meant and how it happened. To say he was again confused is putting it mildly. He felt that he should be more careful next time with Sri Ramakrishna, not giving him any chance to mete out a similar experience. He got into conflicting feelings and was

wondering if this man was a trickster or a truly godly man. For the first time he realized his rational mind could not come to any logical deduction.

Why did he go back to him again then? That is a question even Narendra could not answer. That was his lure. That was his power. And then on this third visit, something even more spectacular happened, despite all the care that Narendra thought he was taking...

Sri Ramakrishna took him to the garden and sat down. No sooner had they reached the garden, Sri Ramakrishna immediately went into a trance and in that state he touched Narendra. Narendra was completely overwhelmed and lost all his outward consciousness. During this time Sri Ramakrishna asked many questions and got all the answers merely by touching him. Ramakrishna came to know that Narendra was a sage who had attained perfection and at will he could give up the body through yoga. If this meeting too slid into the realm of mystery and esoteric fervor, wait till you read about the next... It was even more dramatic. By then Narendra came to the conclusion that this man was no ordinary quack or trickster or sorcerer. He was a man of very high spiritual attainment.

S. Regunathan

Childrens' Corner



Transformation of Grumpy

One Good Deed Leads to Another



Transformation of Grumpy

There was once a giant tree nicknamed 'Grumpy.' He stood tall and splendid with branches outstretched full of lush green leaves. Grumpy would never share his shadow with any of the animals in the forest. He would shoo away any one who came to rest under his shady branches on sweltering hot days.

One year, the autumn and winter months were terribly severe. The cold, blistering winter shed Grumpy of all his leaves and the grumpy tree, without its splendid foliage of leaves, was going to die of cold. One day, a little girl was walking in the forest when she found the giant grumpy tree shivering with cold. She was so saddened by the sight of the tree that she immediately ran home to get a great big blanket to warm the tree. As she was returning with the blanket, the Spirit of the Forest appeared and told the little girl why that giant tree was so solitary, and why no one would help him. Even so, seeing the pitiful condition of the

tree, the girl decided to gently wrap the blanket around the tree. The grumpy tree was surprised and touched by her gentle, loving and compassionate behavior. He survived the severe cold of winter wrapped in the warmth of the blanket and grew strong again. The Grumpy tree sprouted new branches and leaves and stood as splendid as ever. The grumpy tree had learned a lesson from the girl's caring generosity. Whenever she sat next to the trunk, the tree bent down to lovingly shade her from the sun. The Spirit of the Forest saw this and went to tell all the animals in the forest. He told them that from now on they would be able to shade themselves well, because the once grumpy tree had learned that having kind and compassionate beings around makes the world a much better place to live in. Grumpy was now renamed 'The Gentle, Compassionate Tree.'

One Good Deed Leads to Another

Gayatri Kumari Diggi

It was spring time, flowers were blooming and the air was fresh. The grasshopper was happy. His wife had laid eggs and they would be hatched soon so he took his violin and was about to play a happy tune when a mean looking frog appeared and said in a croaky voice, "I am going to eat you."

"Oh no!" pleaded the grasshopper "My wife just laid eggs so I need to take care of her."

The mean frog replied, "Ok but I will be back then I will eat you" and went away hopping and singing.

The frog's croaking voice disturbed the snake who was sleeping on the branch of a tree. "Stop!" he hissed angrily. "You disturbed my sleep now I will swallow you up." "Oh no! Please leave me I promised to see the grasshopper in a few days. Let me eat him and get fat first."

The snake thought it would be better to eat a fat frog so he hissed and went back to sleep.

A snake charmer came by and saw the snake sleeping on the branch. He quickly caught the snake and was about to put it in his basket when the snake woke up hissing "Oh no! I am weak let me go; let me eat a frog and I will dance happily to your tune." The snake charmer let him go saying,

"Go and eat frogs then I will catch you again."

As the snake charmer left, he stumbled on the stump of a tree. He saw a dusty box inside the hollow bark. It was full of gold coins! He thought, "Because I let the snake go God has blessed me with these gold coins to start a new life." He threw his baskets away and walked towards the city with his box of gold. Many days went by and the snake thought, "The snake charmer has not come back maybe because I let the frog go." Feeling good about his good deed he hissed away into the forest.

Meanwhile, the frog peeped from the grass and wondered where the snake was and then he too thought, "I let the grasshopper go and my good deed has saved my life" so he happily hopped away.

Several days passed and the grasshopper was happy that the eggs had hatched and he and his wife happily watched the tiny baby grasshoppers playing in the leaves of the blooming flowers. He took out his violin and started to play a happy tune while his wife danced. In the end all good deeds led to other good deeds and everyone was happy.



**Compassion is our deepest nature.
It arises from our
interconnection with all things."**

Jack Kornfield

Picture credit: Humayun Lalzad

FRNV NEWS AND EVENTS

On 23rd April 2023, a review meeting with FRNV Regional Chapters was held. Members from Chennai, Kochin and Karnataka Chapters along with FRNV Governing Body Members participated. Chennai Chapter has translated the FRNV Teachers Manual in regional languages – Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada.

Meeting discussed and finalized the

following action plans for the FY 2023-2024:-

- a) Strengthening Regional Chapters by inducting new members.
- b) Conducting School Workshops – training the teachers on Values Based education.
- c) Conducting workshop along with IIT-Delhi team on Universal Human



Values

d) Explore Corporate Workshops on Values & Ethics

e) Tap Corporate Social Responsibility funding for Values Education Project

f) Explore De-criminalization of politics and cap on expenses by political parties in consultation with

FRNV Advisory Board.

II. On 5 th May 2023, EKAL Study Circle organized a seminar on Reimaging and Tribal Lives at India International Centre. The seminar was attended by FRNV Governing Body members President/FRNV Shri S Regunathan, Vice President Shri Satish Kumar, Treasurer Shri Prem Arora, and General Secretary Shri Ashwani Kumar.



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