

3. UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS



3.0. UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS – INTRODUCTION

“Man has to undergo different experiences dominated by different qualities from time to time. Man has to experience pleasure as well as pain, sun as well as rain. Man cannot understand the value of joy unless he experiences pain. Pain and pleasure are like sun and shadow, both go together” (SSB 1993, 44)

In the first volume of Study Circles for Divinity we included a chapter titled ‘Managing Emotions’, within which we included compilations of Sai’s words on the individual subjects of Anger, Fear, Grief, Joy and Mind.

We continue this exploration of the emotional field in the present volume with compilations on the subjects of Emotions, Jealousy, Pride, Greed, Patience, Sorrow, Suffering and Compassion. Our challenge is to gain some understanding of these energy fields so that we can maximize the heart-opening, peace-inducing ones like patience and compassion, and profit by – or at least not be poisoned or blinded by – the negative, heart-closing ones like jealousy, pride, greed and sorrow.

Sathya Sai Baba has said that all emotions have a vital role to play in awakening us from our sleep of ignorance about who we really are. All of our feelings can be valuable tools in our quest to rediscover our divine nature, at one with all of creation. He says:

One must feel that all the hunger, thirst, joy and sorrow, grief and loss, suffering and anger, food and appetite are but impulses helping us towards attaining the Presence of the Lord. (Prema V 65)

To put it another way, every one of our emotions, whether they be positive or negative, can be regarded as spiritual ‘rocket fuel’ exquisitely designed to take us closer to our Godhead. But what we also need is direction, otherwise we can find ourselves being propelled away from the Source instead of towards it. Sai’s teachings of supreme wisdom give us the map for our inner journey so that we can guide this mortal craft in which we fly towards re-discovering our true Self.

The emotion itself implicitly tells us whether we are facing the wrong or the right way, whether we have filled our mind with un-Truth instead of Truth. We all know that, when we are feeling impatient, greedy or envious, something is seriously amiss and, like the fish out of water which thrashes about in its discomfort, we have a ‘divine discontent’ which makes us strive to relieve the discomfort. In contrast, when we feel compassionate, humble or patient, we seek to have more of this nectar – we know that we are facing our sun and have only to keep walking in that direction to find ourselves, to experience union with the Whole, the Infinite, the All.

As we all know so well, the mind is the key. Sai Baba says that if we turn it towards the 'right' – towards goodness, truth and beauty – the lock to our heart will spring open; if we turn it to the 'left' – leaving behind the noble, uplifting virtues – the heart will be 'locked up', unable to open to the delight and glory of our true nature.

Our time here on Earth is so short – when we look back on a few decades of missed opportunities – and yet we have such a rich load of gold to mine. Every emotion, whether low or high, negative or positive, dark or light, is a doorway into and an invitation to explore a vast interior world which embraces all of the external as well. Each influx or recession of feeling is an opportunity for the bubble of illusion to burst, for us to die once more to this identification with who we think we are – the little self – and to know ourselves a little more as the entire Ocean, the universal 'I' and the all-inclusive 'We'.