



Feel The Suffering Of Others

If you wish to server a less fortunate being, who is suffering or is in poverty or in difficulties, there is necessary for you to get in tune with that being. Then only will you understand the other person's real condition, real state, the real experience he is undergoing, what his suffering is. You can never dream of having true and real sympathy for these people unless you get into their shoes.

There is a word in English, 'empathy' [the power of identifying oneself mentally with (and so fully comprehending) a person or object]. This is indeed what is necessary. The more you are in a state of empathy with that person, the more you will be able to feel sympathy for that person. And having entered into his feelings, sympathy and compassion are involved from within us. The urge to relive the person from his state of suffering is also invoked within us, because partially we also feel that suffering.

Mahatma Gandhi felt the suffering of all poor, impoverished, far-flung rural population of India. In order to feel this oneness, he took a vow: "I shall make my living the same as that of impoverished peasant of India." They toiled with only a little piece of course cloth wrapped around their waist, with maybe a similar piece thrown over their shoulder. That became Gandhiji's dress. And the sandal he wore were the heavy, rough, but durable sandals made by village cobblers.

He gave us this principle of empathy, this ideal of trying to feel oneness with those whom we want to serve as a karma-yogi, as a spiritual person. And he has also given us the great principle of simple living and high thinking. Live simply, but think sublimely, think nobly.

Gurudev had this inimitable trait. Some simple people came from faraway South India, and in his presence they stood overcome with awe. He immediately perceived their state and put them at ease: "Come, come! Come close; don't keep standing. Sit here. I am just like you. You are in no way less than me. I am not in any way greater than you." And he did not say this as a shrewd psychological measure. No, not at all. This came from him spontaneously. That was his nature – simplicity of heart and nobility of thoughts. May his benedictions be upon us all and grant us the grace of a life of simplicity, sublime thinking, and empathy and sympathy!

May God Bless You All!

■ *Swami Chidananda*