

The Logic of Love

Chapter 28: Spirituality and Emotions

While traveling in India in early 1987 I was blessed by an invitation to visit The Meher Baba Pilgrim Center. I did not know anything about Meher Baba at the time, but being interested in spirituality, I decided to accept the invitation. During my one-week stay there, I learned that Meher Baba devotees believe that Meher Baba was an avatar. An avatar is a periodic incarnation of God. Meher Baba taught that he had previously incarnated as Zoroaster, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed.

Meher Baba did not speak a word from 1925 until he passed on in 1969. He communicated by use of a self-styled sign language that his close associates came to learn and by using an alphabet board on which he would point out letters in order to spell words. I was told that he did not speak because he believed all the great truths about God had already been expressed. His mission, therefore, was to awaken people, to inspire people to focus their lives on loving God.

Of the many stories I heard about Meher Baba during my stay at the pilgrim center, my favorite one concerned his appointment of a principal for an elementary school that he had directed his followers to establish. I do not recall the name of the principal. Let's call him Simple Simon because, as the story goes, he could not read or write. Meher Baba had an inner circle of disciples called the mandali. These men were similar to Jesus' apostles in that they worked very closely with Meher Baba and reported to him directly.

When the mandali heard that Meher Baba had picked Simple Simon to be the principal of the new school, they were very distressed. They saw the appointment of Simple Simon as an embarrassment and an administrative nightmare. Some of them took it upon themselves to try to persuade Meher Baba to change his mind.

They pleaded with him for an explanation. "Why? Why would you pick someone so undereducated and unqualified to be the principal of a school?" Meher Baba pointed to a nearby stick and indicated to the mandali that they should go get the stick and hit him with it. "No! No! We cannot do it!" they beseeched him. "We love you with all our hearts. We could never bring harm to you. Ask us anything. But please, spare us from an atrocity such as this! We cannot bear it!"

Then, Meher Baba told them to get Simple Simon. When Simple Simon

arrived, Meher Baba told him to get the stick and to hit him with it. Without hesitation, Simple Simon did as he was told. Looking to his mandali, Meher Baba communicated that only those who are asleep disobey, in the name of love, the one whom they call God.

Emotions can easily become an obstacle to critical and logical thinking. For this reason, I encourage a dispassionate, though light-hearted, analysis of the issues relating to faith in God. This allows the logic of love to bear fruits that will nourish us for a lifetime. By not indulging emotions, the steadiness of a critical and logical mind is available to safely pilot our souls through the uncertain waters that separate one gnostic paradigm from another. Also, our best hope for unifying ourselves through shared meanings and common values comes from developing a shared reasoning. This, however, does not mean we should deny ourselves the supreme celestial joy that naturally flows from the faith-recognition that we are the children of God. After all, we are not Vulcans.(1)

Emotions have the potential to be an excellent resource for guiding spiritual growth. Emotions, when permitted expression, are the body's way of reflecting *what* we value in life and *how* we value it. They represent the physical integration of mind meanings with spiritual values.

Emotions can generally be classified as deriving from one of three states of consciousness: 1) loving in the present, 2) being fearful about the future, or 3) being judgmental about the past.

Our emotions are like a political system in the sense that it is important to distinguish between the creation of a model system and whether that system is used well. For instance, a well-run democracy could vote for the enslavement of a particular race. This does not mean that democracy is bad; it only demonstrates how a good system can be used to create a bad result. In a similar way, even if we express our emotions in only healthy ways and in appropriate circumstances, this does not mean that we are instantly eligible for sainthood. In order to have good government, we must strive to improve the mechanisms of government as well as the nobility of the citizenry. In order to live healthy spiritual lives, we must express emotions in a healthy manner as well as attend to the personal enhancement of meanings and values.

Spiritual life is fostered by loyalty to supreme values and an on going enhancement of meanings. Vigilantly working for the development of meanings and values helps us wisely direct our *outward* experiences of love. Emoting is the *inward* expression of these value loyalties and mind meanings. When we act (or don't act) in ways that are inconsistent with our values, we are lying to the world. When we emote (or don't emote) in ways that are inconsistent with our values, we are lying to ourselves.

This is not to say that unless every emotion is immediately expressed, we are being untrue to ourselves. Maturity demands that we balance the spontaneous expression of emotion with the demands of living. Emotional disengagement allows the surgeon's hand to remain steady. Unfortunately, for a wide range of cultural and personal reasons, the mere experience of certain emotions is sometimes considered wrong. When emoting in general or when some specific emotion becomes taboo, we lose the ability to clearly see the meanings and values that we attach to life.

Emotions can reveal our current state of spiritual growth when viewed as a reflection of the meanings and values that we *actually* (not idealistically) attach to life. This is equally true for the physical, mental, and spiritual facets of our lives. On the physical level, for instance, a lack of food can create a physical pain. But the pain is not the emotion. If one is fasting for God, the pain of hunger may engender an emotional attitude of repentance that brings forth tears of remorse. If one is starving in a prison camp, the pain of hunger may develop into a fear of death or it may arouse hatred for one's captors. On the mental level, trying to solve a difficult math problem may cause the mind to struggle. This can result in debilitating frustration or be an exciting challenge. On the spiritual level, difficulties with others (or with life in general) may result in a wide range of emotional responses. We may become angry as a result of judging another person. We may feel sad that someone's heart has slammed the door on love. Or we may feel joy born of the hope and trust that from such tribulation greater friendship will develop.

Love begets happiness and sadness because life on earth is imperfect. Love brings the joy of relationships. It brings us pleasure to see those we love do well and inspires gratitude when we appreciate the blessings in our lives. When relationships go poorly, love is reflected in sadness

occasioned by a sense of separation. Love may also beget sadness because of our compassion for the suffering of others. In contrast to love, selfishness generally brings about various forms of fear and judgment. Fear is the basis for selfish emotions about the future; judgment is the basis for selfish emotions about the past.

Emotions, when they are neither overly repressed nor overly indulged, are the healthy way in which we become integrated with our values on the physical level. Those emotions that are the product of love should be accepted in the body (permitted healthy expression) and *validated* by the mind. Validated emotions are reinforced as the worthwhile product of the values that give rise to them. In contrast, emotions that are the product of fear and judgment should be accepted in the body (vented in ways that will not make our situation worse) so that we may become aware of our need for a more spiritualized attitude and a greater level of understanding. Such selfish emotions, however, should not be validated. They should not be reinforced by the mind because they are not consistent with our supreme value of love.

By accepting but refusing to validate emotions that are not the product of love, we give ourselves an opportunity to see ourselves (as well as the world around us) in a new light. Pent up emotions, especially ones based on selfishness, are a vexation to the spirit and an obstacle to the reasoning abilities of the mind. By allowing the body to release these emotions, we are able to let go of unloving attitudes. Once the body has released the tension created by selfish values, then the spirit and mind are once again at liberty to recommit to holding love as the highest value.

Footnote:

(1) Vulcans are a fictional race of people from the *Star Trek* series who are shun emotions in an effort to glorify logical thinking above all other states of consciousness. Spock (referred to in Chapter 2) was a Vulcan.

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