

— Mahāprabhu’s Culture of Transcendental Love —

When a person takes shelter of *bhakti*, mercy towards all living entities is a natural quality. Compassion does not have separate existence from *bhakti*. The quality which, when offered to the Lord, is called *bhakti* or *prema*, becomes friendship, compassion and indifference when directed towards other living beings. It is a feeling that is inherent in the eternal nature of the soul. In the spiritual realm this quality manifests only as friendship but in the material world it manifests as friendship towards devotees, mercy towards the innocent and indifference towards the offenders. These are but different aspects of the same compassion. In the conditioned state this compassion is extremely stunted. It starts with affection for the individual body, then widens to include attachment to one’s household, then to *varṇa*, and then to countrymen. Expanding, it may grow to include the human beings of the whole world. However, compassion becomes complete when directed towards all living entities. Patriotism is but a limited aspect of this sentiment in relation to a country. Philanthropy is compassion directed towards all humanity. However, Vaiṣṇavas should not be limited by these mundane sentiments; they should have compassion for the complete range of living entities, not wanting to cause harm to any of them, human or otherwise.

— Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, Third Rainfall, Third Shower.