

Emote

The other day I was interviewing someone for my Parallel Lives project, and he said that one of the things he wished Americans did more of was "Emote". And I thought that was very interesting because I had had the same feeling, even if the possible meaning for me was perhaps a slightly different one. A thing to remember: we had both been born in the Indian subcontinent.

What could I possibly mean? Aren't we forever emoting; railing about this or that in newspapers and internet Blogs and radio and on talk shows, so much so that sometimes there seems to be no space left for any positive news? What could I, born on the other side from here, then mean by emote?

The Webster's Dictionary says that emote means to express emotion expressively and theatrically. By that count, I think most avid sports fans in this country emote. Often! However, how many times do we go to a party or get together and find ourselves engaged in conversation that's not just small talk? How many times do we feel that we want to stay there a long time past normal children's and adult's bedtimes and keep talking because the conversation has engaged our soul and many of our senses?

How many times do we feel ourselves want to go rolling on the floor in laughter and actually do, or get so hot and excited that we have to stand up and engage, or sometimes just sit quietly and let the conversation enter our insides or the music and the poetry seep in, engage our emotions, and make us want to hold on to those moments? If it is now for you, consider yourselves fortunate and let your children sit in.

Or maybe, it was last when you were in college? Or in school when the world was still a wonder perhaps, and opening, before it closed our selves in? Or maybe if we were fortunate- in the drama club- where we were free to emote and express and feel, and the normal bounds of time and space and conventions didn't apply?

Articulate. To me emote is to articulate. Not endless speaking from a pulpit or subduing other people into listening infinitum to one's long drone, but to articulate with feeling, with thoughts, with engagement, fearless wit and humor, emotion, and with a command of the language that is not learnt from standard textbook and DVD and cartoon formats, but comes from constant social interaction in a fluid society that engages in all its senses and all its people; parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, neighbors, friends, parents friends...

Alice, an undaunted activist, author and my friend commented that apparently children in pre-schools are more and more coming in lacking basic social interaction skills. She heard this from a source who would know since that person has been teaching pre-school for about thirty years now.

More and more, children don't have the skills to address elders, teachers and make basic social conversation beyond- I want this and I want that, and to talk and act out things they have seen on television and DVD's (even when they are in cars!) When is the time for social interaction in their lives? Will these children ever be able to hold a conversation, let alone be able to emote?

Does this all mean that I am standing myself up as a great emote-r, articulator and expresser of feelings and thoughts. Sorry, no. I never was a great one, though I do enjoy the company of others who are, and am forever on the lookout.

So, should we cross the world at least in the hope that we may perhaps emote more, if nothing else. Articulate. Express. Quote proverbs and witticisms honed over time, and liberally sprinkle poetry and philosophy from Keats and Kabir and Faiz. Perhaps not.

Because some things have crossed over faster than us: The thousand plus one channels on cable, round the clock work days and hard alcohol- turning India into one of the highest consumer's in the world. How many will soon have the time left or the capacity to stand and emote? And then perhaps, maybe it's a cultural thing after all- we are all emoting- but it's a totally different thing in a different culture and time. You decide.