

26. Building Or Begging?

I myself asked Sunandamma to call you all here this evening so that I can talk to you about the great piece of social work you are engaged in. I laid the foundation stone for your institution this morning; I blessed the endeavour because you are serving women and children, especially children who are mentally defective and physically handicapped. I understand you have the help of experts in psychology, who can understand the special problems of the underdeveloped children. So far so good.

As trustees who have undertaken to help Sunandamma in this Mission of Mercy, I advise you to start the construction of the rooms for the inmates and for the classes first. The prayer hall can wait; the atmosphere of the place where such work is being done cannot be anything but a prayerful one. This is penance (*tapas*) that you are doing, and the children and adults who watch you and your efforts do not require anything more inspiring than that.

Discover a bridge between ancient and modern

Sunandamma was telling Me that some of you want the buildings to be reminiscent of ancient Indian architecture, a kind of temple, in fact, while others prefer the latest style, plain utilisation and cheap, without elaborate decorative motifs. You cannot revive the hut made of leaves, the hermitage, now, in the 20th century; you have to discover a bridge between the ancient and the modern. Moreover, I want the ancient spirit in the heart, not in bricks and mortar.

When the children are all of this modern age, affected by its attraction and attitudes, how can the style of the building in which they dwell change their outlook? And what of the teachers? They are imbued with the passions and prejudices of the modern age. Change their hearts into leaf huts, full of the ideals and aspirations of the sages of this land, charged with simplicity and sincerity, moved by the urge to expand in love to all beings. Then the style of the building does not matter. It is the architecture of the mind that matters. If the needs of the modern age require a change, change the non-essentials. Do not dilute the truth so much that it loses its genuineness.

If someone favours drinks of a blue colour or red, do not pour blue dye or red dye into the bottle; pour the drink into a blue or red glass, and offer it to them. That would be enough. So too, if one style of building is to be preferred, by all means, put up the structure, but do not change the essentials of the work to be done therein or the outlook of the workers.

Patience and strenuous effort will be rewarded

Pleasant and moderate, these are the directions. Let it not be too garish, too ramshackle, too costly, too fragile. Take the middle course to yield maximum benefits. The craving for sense objects cannot be given up fully, so transform it into an instrument for worship. Dedicate all your efforts to the Lord, and accept all achievements and failures as proofs of the grace of the Lord. His will decreed that they should so happen. Transform all six passions into instruments for spiritual uplift.

I know also that you are worried about funds for the completion of your plans. Sunandamma even asked Me to show the way! Well, He who showed the way so long will do so hereafter also. This will be completed; oth-

erwise, I would not have laid the foundation stone. Good works never languish for want of funds; the Lord will come to their rescue. Only it may take some time, so do not lose heart. The orange is quite bitter when it is green, but time gradually sweetens it into a delicious fruit. Patience and strenuous effort will get rewarded.

I must tell you, however, that for such good causes as this, do not collect money in devious ways. Help should come from pious hearts, from well-earned money, from persons who know and appreciate the purpose for which they give. That is why I oppose all benefit shows, where you tempt people with a dance or a drama or a film and collect money for your pet plan. I am also against lotteries, where the lure of getting a big prize for which one does not do anything, a prize collected out of other people's earning, is used for the collection of funds.

Let each one give out of the fullness of his heart, on their own initiative, whatever they can give gladly after studying well the present work and the future possibilities of the institution. Your duty is only to inform. Do not try even to persuade. Begging for the sake of work that is inherently good is an insult to human nature —the one who asks and the one who is asked are both demeaned.

I want to give you this courage and this confidence. Carry on in a spirit of humility and fortitude, and you will succeed.

Meeting of the Trustees, Mysore City, 1963-09-15

All the joy you crave is in you, but, like a person who has vast riches in an iron chest but has no idea where the key is, you suffer. With proper directions, dwelling upon them in the silence of meditation, it is possible to secure the key, open the chest, and be rich in joy.

Sathya Sai Baba