

36. Gift Of Spiritual Knowledge

EVEN in this holy place of Srisailam, such a jubilant and auspicious celebration has not taken place for years. In this land where penance (*tapas*) alone is valued as significant, in this land of spiritual activity, there is no reason why confusion and turmoil must spread. It is all due to the multiplication of wants and desire for sensual pleasure instead of spiritual contentment. Even the starting of a place for the gift of food to the poor, here, by the Akhila Bharatha Aarya Vyshya Sangham (Association), today is a sign of the decline of faith and strength. There should not be any need to feed; the cry “give, give” should not be heard in this land of plenty and prosperity (*an-napurna*). This place must be approached in a true spirit of humility and prayer. Picnic parties and tourists have no place here.

There are many legends regarding the temple at Srisailam. Mallikarjuna (a form of Siva) is the white, fragrant, pure God, the grace-showering Siva, who bends in mercy at the slightest yearning of the devotee. Bhramaramba (the consort) is the bee, hovering on the fragrant jasmine (*mallika*), drawn by the honey of the flower, the true representative of the devotee.

Legends the forefathers have treasured

Do not laugh at the legends that your forefathers have gathered and treasured. They have invested the place with sanctity and elevated the thoughts and fancies of generations of men. This shrine has consoled and comforted thousands and thousands of pious persons, year after year. Sankara was here, and he sang of the holiness of this place and the calm he enjoyed here. He installed a *chakra* (sanctified holy symbol), which, I may tell you, is in a small cave by the side of Pathala Ganga.

The desire to do service to the poor and the hungry is good, but it is taking a turn toward building up institutions and collecting funds and seeking donations. While this is being done, egoism increases, envy spreads, feelings of inferiority and superiority spring up, and the mental peace one had is spent while one is caught in this affair. All the struggle falls on one person, though there may be a committee. And, when the institution is finally built, a sense of possession develops, and though all institutions are the Lord’s and nothing can rise or exist without Him, people forget it and claim all the credit.

There are certain dire possibilities that I want all social workers to guard against. First, cleanse your own minds; then start advising others. Earn mental peace and strength for yourself; then try to secure them for others. Learn the secret of lasting happiness yourself; then endeavour to make others happy. Seek the real limb, not the artificial limb. Get the doctor who would assure, “hereafter you will not fall ill,” and not the doctor who gives some relief to the present attack.

The atmosphere of holy places should improve. The nature of monks (*sanyasis*) requires drastic correction. Too many of them are involved in householder functions; too many of them are after worldly fame and riches

All this will be done by Me as part of establishment of *dharmā*. The Prasanthi *Vidwan Mahasabha* (Society of Pandits) about which Veerabhadhra Sastry spoke is one of the instruments for this revival of *dharmā*.

Humanity needs food more for the spirit

More than food for the stomach, humanity needs food for the spirit. The “food (*anna*)” that Annapurna Devi (Goddess of Nourishment) gives is the not food —rice and curry. The alms that She is asked to give are alms of spiritual wisdom, not the handful of rice that you think it means. They are the alms of spiritual wisdom, love, devotion, and grace). Seek Her grace to get more spiritual wisdom, more love, more devotion, and more grace.

Do not lower the standard of service when serving pilgrims in this holy place; place emphasis here on devotion, detachment, and spiritual wisdom. Do not encourage pomp and insincerity here, of all places. If someone, out of sincere devotion, gives a naya paisa, accept it as if it is a crore. Do not accept a crore if it is given with a view to parade wealth or advertise detachment.

I am laying the foundation stone of the new block of this pilgrims rest-house, and I bless that you may so act that the significance of the name “Annapurna” is not neglected. You have My blessings in full measure; join hands, all of you, in this task and make it a success soon. Do not feed indiscriminately and make this an asylum for idlers. Feed only those who come with yearning to spend some days in this holy atmosphere; then only will people be grateful. Feed those who come here for spiritual discipline, for living their lives in the presence of God; feed those who are living examples of the joy that comes from spiritual effort.

Srisailam, 1963-12-05

The sages of ancient times divided *karma* into *vikarma* (*karma* that is intentionally done) and *akarma* (*karma* that is done without any intention to gain the consequence). Follow the latter, and you will save yourselves from suffering.

All other activities — the earning of wealth, of reputation, of fame and publicity — result in suffering.

Sathya Sai Baba