

## 12. Mirror and comb

PREVIOUS to each Festival that is celebrated at Prashaanthi Nilayam, it has become necessary to select and authorise certain individuals for service as volunteers, or *Swayamsevaks*. The prime purpose is to provide them with a chance to train themselves in the attitudes of humility, readiness and reverence, that are so essential for one's own happiness and for social security. I have been addressing the persons selected every time, so that they may know what is expected of them, especially as the urge behind their service activities.

Among the nine steps of devotional progress, the fourth and the fifth highlight the attitude of *seva*; it is referred to as Paadhasevanam and *Dhaasyam* (serving the Feet of the Lord; acts offered at the Feet of the Lord; feeling oneself as the servant of the Lord). Service is basically activity arising out of the yearning to win the Grace of Go. Through *seva* alone can man attain Mastery, and through mastery of the senses, the passions and the predilections, man can attain Divinity itself.

Heads bloat only through ignorance; if the Truth be known, all men will become as humble as Bharthrhari. He was a mighty emperor, who ruled from sea to sea; his decree was unquestioned; his will prevailed over vast multitudes of men. Yet, when he realised in a flash that life is but a short sojourn here below, he renounced his wealth and power, and assumed the ochre robes of the wandering monk. His countries and vassal princes shed genuine tears, for they loved and adored him. They lamented that he had donned the tattered robe of the penniless penitent, and lived on alms. "What a precious possession you have thrown away? And, what a sad bargain you have made?," they wailed. But, Bharthrhari replied, "Friends, I have made a very profitable bargain. This robe is so precious that even my empire is poor payment in exchange." That is the measure of the grandeur of the spiritual path that leads to God.

### God yields Grace when His commands are followed

The spirit of sacrifice is the basic equipment of the *sevak*. Without the inspiration of the sense of sacrifice, your *seva* will be hypocrisy, a hollow ritual. Inscribe this on your heart. Inscribe it deep and clear. There are four modes of writing, dependent on the material on which the text is inscribed. The first is, writing on water; it is washed out even while the finger moves. The next is, writing on sand. It is legible, until the wind blows it into mere flatness. The third is, the inscription on rocks; it lasts for centuries, but, it too is corroded by the claws of Time. The inscription on steel can withstand the wasting touch of Time. Have this so inscribed on your heart .... the axiom that "serving others is meritorious, that harming others or remaining unaffected and idle while others suffer, is sin." I am not giving you any badge to wear this time, for a badge on the shirt is a distinction you must win and not decoration to be paraded.

God is Love and can be won only through the cultivation and exercise of Love. He cannot be trapped by any trick; He yields Grace only when His commands are followed---commands to love all, to serve all. When you love all and serve all, you are serving yourself most, yourself whom you love most! For God's Grace envelops you then, and you are strengthened beyond all previous experience. If I pin the badge on your apparel, you will unpin it soon; when it is taken off the shirt, you will feel relieved that you have been released from the obligation to love and serve. You will only play a temporary role in a drama, donning the badge and doffing it.

### **Bend the body, mend the senses, end the mind**

In this village, there was a young man once, who acted the role of an Emperor in a folk-drama enacted on a sacred day, in the temple. The curtain went down with sunrise, but, he would not remove the crown from his head; he insisted that he was Emperor still. He continued to order his subjects about, for months. He ordered his kinsmen to execute this fellow one day, and that fellow the next day, and died himself of high fever, pretty soon! That was insanity. But, there is a sane way of behaviour, of the fight role.

Wear the invisible badge of a volunteer of God at all hours and in all places. Let all the days of living be a continuous offering of Love, as an oil lamp exhausts itself in illumining the surroundings. Bend the body, mend the senses, and end the mind---that is the process of attaining the status of 'the children of immortality,' which the *Upanishads* have reserved for man.

God is the embodiment of sweetness. Attain Him by offering Him, who resides in all, the sweetness that He has dowered on you. Crush the cane in the mill of set, a, boil it in the cauldron of penitence; decolorise it of all sensual itch; offer the crystallised sugar of compassionate Love to Him.

Man is the noblest of all animals, the final product of untold ages of progressive evolution; but, he is not consciously striving to live up to his heritage. The beasts held a World Conference to confabulate on the authenticity of man's claim to be the acme of creation and the monarch of all that walks the earth. The Lion presided over the deliberations.

### **Man is a standing disgrace to animals**

The tiger questioned the claims of man; the leopard seconded the resolution of emphatic protest. It made a devastating speech, condemning man. "He is a standing disgrace to animals everywhere. He manufactures and drinks merrily fatal poisons and is proud of his utter foolishness. He cheats his own kind and spends all his energies and resources in devising diabolical weapons to wipe out his sisters and brothers; he prods horses and dogs to run in desperate haste and gambles his earnings away, while they gallop along the track; he is cruel, greedy, immoral, insatiable and unashamed. He sets a bad example to the animal world. Though endowed with superior emotions and intelligence, his behaviour is disgusting and demeaning," he said. "We do not know if and where we will get our next meal; we have no sure place of rest. We have nothing to wrap round ourselves, except the skin. But, yet, the least of us is a far worthier child of God than this monster called man," he concluded.

The fox rose and added, "We have a season when we mate, but man, I am ashamed to say, has broken all restraints and cares for no rules. He is a law unto himself and a disaster to the rest."

The Lion rose, to sum up the arguments. He agreed with the general trend of the tirade against man, provoked by his undeserved claim to supremacy. But he refused to tar all with the same brush. He distinguished between men who are bestial and worse, and men who have transcended their bestial past, by the proper use of the special gifts of discrimination and detachment. The latter, he said, ought to be revered by all beasts as Masters, while the former deserved severe reprisals and condemnation.

### **Be concerned about the dust of envy and hate**

Each of you has struggled upwards from the stone to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man! Do not slide back into the beast; rise higher to Divinity, shining with the new effulgence of

Love. The Divine is the energy that animates, the urge that circulates the blood in your veins, that transmits knowledge and experience through the nerves, that correlates and collects for storage the impressions your senses gather, the conclusions your intelligence garners! Keep in line with the Divine, by means of Love, Truth and Goodness.

Nowadays, there is an inevitable pair of accessories in the vanity bags of ladies and even in the pockets of gents: a mirror and a comb. You dread that your charm is endangered when your hair is in slight disarray, or when your face reveals patches of powder; so, you try to correct the impression immediately. While so concerned about this fast-deteriorating personal charm, how much more concerned should you really be about the dust of envy and hate, the patches of conceit and malice that desecrate your mind and hearts? Have a mirror and a comb for this purpose, too! Have the mirror of *Bhakthi* (devotion), to judge whether they are clean and bright and winsome; have the comb of Jnaana (for, wisdom, earned by discrimination straightens problems, resolves knots, and smoothes the tangle) to control and channelise the feelings and emotions that are scattered wildly in all directions.

Whatever you do, wherever you are, remember that I am with you, in you; that will save you from conceit and error. That will make your *seva* worthy of the people you serve.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 26-6-1969*

*Little children are trained to walk, by means of a three- wheeled contraption which they hold and push along. The **Pranava** is such a contraption, with the three wheels of **A U** and **M**, the **Omkaara** Tricycle. Holding it, man can learn to use the two feet of **bhakthi** and **vairaagya**. If he gives up his hold on the Omkaara, he plumps down on the ground helplessly. If he walks on with the help of the **Pranava japa**, he can certainly realise the glory of the **Brahmam**, which is the very substance of the Universe.*

**Sathya Sai Baaba**