

19. Counsel for the chosen

THE *deha* (body) is the temple of God; the *desha* (country, nation) is the *deha* of God. The *deha* is composed of the five elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Sky. The care of the country is as important as the care of the body. For, happiness and misery, health and disease, pleasure and pain, anxiety and peace are dependent on the health and disease of *desha* (the nation). You have within the next few days, as volunteers at the Prashaanthi Nilayam, the great chance of serving not only yourself but also the country---for people from all the States of the country and even from nations outside its bounds are gathering here for the Dashara Festival. They are all one in heart, in aspiration and in eagerness, whatever the language they speak or the creed they profess! They are clamouring to get this chance to serve as volunteers, but, remember, you alone have had the luck to draw my attention and to receive the blessing. It is therefore a great responsibility.

The service that you can do to the thousands who gather here is not something you render to others, it is service you render to yourselves. The help is to your own selves. There was a beggar who once wailed before a rich house for a month; the master, reclining in an easy chair, drove him out with harsh abuse. But the beggar persisted. He asked for some stale food, at least! At this, the daughter-in-law, who was at her meals in the inner apartments, replied; "My dear fellow! We are at present eating stale food. The fresh dishes are being cooked." The beggar knew what she meant; he understood that the woman was pointing out that the father-in-law by his insolence and cruelty was preparing for a miserable future, while his present high standard of living was made possible by the merit he acquired through charity in previous lives! We eat stale food, that is to say, the results of the acts in past lives. We also cook our future meals. So, by this service you are preparing for a nice banquet in the future, whatever be the food that you are now eating as a result of past acts!

Life is a long elaborate car-festival

You have come here, and the others too are coming, for one gain. You must have attended various *ratha-jaathras* (car-festivals) in our country. The procession will be very elaborate and long. Drums, cymbals, *bhajans*, bands of musicians, even clowns will march ahead. Flags and festoons, arches and pandhals will be erected in the path of the *rath* or chariot, or temple car. Elephants richly caparisoned, horses with silver trappings, bullocks and cows, their horns tipped with silver jingles, and villagers dancing folk lils may also be there. But, what is all this for? It is not for these that the pilgrims come from long distances at great expense. All this is to highlight the many storied chariot, which itself is but the vehicle for the Idol, which itself is but a symbol of the Lord, that every one has come to adore! Similarly, remember that all the vanities and displays of life, the clownings and the dances, the miming and the mumbling, the parades and pastimes which constitute life are only for the adoration of the Lord. Life is a long elaborate *ratha-jaathra*. Every activity must be judged against that background and evaluated. Concentrate on the central theme of life, not on the frills and edges.

Remember that every one coming here has this central theme uppermost in mind; do not discourage them. Do your best to help them achieve their aim, by example as well as by precept, politely administered.

Do not be enslaved by your senses

Every passing minute is a precious gift from God, which you have to use for the best and most lasting benefit. Be happy that you can do so by serving others and catering to their urgent needs. Do not fritter away the minutes in loose talk, retailing scandal, poring over debilitating novels, witnessing films, or mixing with flippant companions. Do not be enslaved by your senses, but bravely resist their demands for indiscriminate freedom. You have the unfailing spring of *Aanandha* in the *Aathman*, which is your reality; why then ruin your health, your peace of mind, running after senses which drag you through the objective world in pursuit of trivial transient joys?

This badge imposes on you great burdens. It will place you prominently before the people; when you ask others to maintain silence, a thousand eyes will be watching, whether you are yourself maintaining silence. You must not exhibit impatience or anger; you must not show any partiality to persons from your village or region, those who speak your language, nor should you show any disrespect or indifference to persons from other regions, those who speak languages other than your own. In all matters, try to discover what action will please me and then behave accordingly. Whoever may or may not watch you, I shall be with you, wherever you are, now or later, here or elsewhere; so, be sincere, never try to hoodwink or pretend or deceive.

Pay no attention to the bad in others

This is the introduction for a lifetime of *saadhana* for each of you. Detachment is the first step in *saadhana*. Silence helps you not to entangle yourself in the affairs of others; that is why, it is encouraged as a preliminary. Be like the ant; when the ant gets a mixture of sand and sugar, it selects only sugar; it neglects the sand. See only the good in others; pay no attention to the bad. They may criticise and cavil at you; but preserve your equanimity and do not take them to heart! Keep them out; they are sand particles.

Doctors among you who have been allotted the duty of going round and discovering persons likely to need your attention, must be extra cordial and considerate. Don't bark questions at the patients; have patience while listening to their stories; half the cure is effected by kindness, softness and sympathy. *Vaidhyo Naaraayano Hari*, the *Shaasthras* say--"The doctor is God in human form." It is in that spirit and with that awe and reverence that people come to you, and receive the drugs you give. Live up to that estimate of your service! Nowadays, doctors have lost the art of soft, sweet speech; learn to speak with compassion; have in your bag the medicines necessary for the treatment of all types of illness; do not delay or drift, for want of the drug.

Volunteers must take sick persons to the doctors or bring the doctor to them, if they cannot be taken. The crow sits on the back of the buffalo and thrusts its beak into the raw wound! It has no conception of the pain the beak causes! Doctors are not aware of the distress they cause, by neglect or by short temper; volunteers are not aware of the pain they cause by angry words, or even by a gesture of contempt or resentment! Imagine what such a gesture can do for you, if you were in that position---and so avoid it. Always try to put yourselves in the position of the other and, judge your action against that background. Then you will not be wrong.

Do not withhold the sweet word to the sick

Be pure in word and deed, and keep impure thoughts away. I am in every one of you and so, I become aware of your slightest wave of thought. When the clothes become dirty, you have to give them for wash. When your mind is soiled, you have to be born again, for the cleansing

operations. The *dhobi* beats the cloth on the hard stone, and draws over it the hot iron, to straighten the folds. So, too, you will have to pass through a train of travail in order to become fit to approach God. See Me as resident in every one; give them all the help you can, all the service they need; do not withhold the sweet word, the supporting hand, the assuring smile, the comforting company, the consoling conversation.

You are now being initiated into a Vow, a status which involves duties and obligations. Krishna wears the *Thilak* of *Kasthuri* (the Dot of Musk) on His forehead indicating the attainment of Jnaana. He wears the Pearl of Purity, on His nose, the point where *Dhyaama* is concentrated. He has on His wrist four sacred red strings wound round, to indicate the pledges He has taken for the sake of living beings--to save the good, to punish the wicked, to foster righteousness, to rescue from sin all those who surrender unconditionally to Him. You too have taken a vow today, and worn the badge, as *a kankan* (red string) round the wrist! You must also rescue the distressed, from the unsocial elements that may disturb the even tenor of the Nilayam, and spread joy and content all around you. You have to be examples of *Shaantham* (Equanimity), *Sahanam* (Fortitude) and *Prema*. (Love).

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 11.10.1969