

6. A flower at His feet

I HAVE told you about the ideals and technique of *seva* (selfless service), often times before and I am calling upon you once again to experience the joy thereof. I need not dilate again on the special nature of the opportunity that is now offered to you here. Render your hearts cool with delight; share the delight with others; adore God in this delectable form. When you go into the qualifications needed for *seva*, you will know that a pure heart--uncontaminated by conceit, greed, envy, hatred or competition is essential; also, faith in God, as the spring of vitality, virtue, and justice. *Seva* is the worship you offer to the God in the heart of everyone. Do not ask another which State you belong to, or which caste or creed you profess. See your favourite Form of God in that other person; as a matter of fact, he is not 'other' at all. It is His image, as much as you are. You are not helping some 'one individual'; you are adoring Me, in him. I am before you in that Form; so, what room is there for the ego in you to raise its hood?

Duty is God; Work is worship. Even the tiniest work is a flower placed at the Feet of God. Approach the pilgrims who come here for the Festival with a heart filled with treasure of Love.

Every kind of service is an act of worship

Do not put the badge in your pocket when your work here is over and the festival is finished, and when you leave for home to resume your old avocations and your discarded habits. This is not a three-day *thamaasha* (show). This is a life-time's pilgrim march. The badge must get inscribed on the heart, indelibly, for life. Wherever you see a sick person, a dispirited, disconsolate, diseased person, there is your field of service. Every blood cell, every nerve, must tingle with Love, with eagerness to share that Love with the forlorn. When Love has filled the heart, it has really been transformed into Divinity, for, God is Love and Love is God. It is this Love, and the compassion that flowed from it that made the great saints of India and of other countries, like Kabeer, Tukaaram, St. Francis, Raamakrishna, immortal.

There are people, at the Nilayam, who have been here for 20, 15, 10 years and such long periods, but, only their bodies have grown older; their *seva* yearning has not grown. Life at the Prashaanthi Nilayam must deepen faith in the *seva* path to salvation. It is the attitude that is essential. The particular item of service might be small. You may not get a chance to partake in some gigantic scheme of service through which millions may be benefitted; you can lift a lame lamb over a stile, or, lead a blind child across a busy road. That too is an act of worship.

A copy of the Geetha may be available for twenty-five paise; a puerile novel may cost ten rupees. Which is more worthwhile? Which can transmute base metal into gold? *Seva* is more fruitful than *japa*, *dhyaana*, *yajna* and *yaaga*, usually recommended for spiritual aspirants. For, it serves two purposes: the extinction of the ego, and the attainment of *aanandha* (bliss).

When someone sitting near you is sunk in sorrow; can you be happy? No. It may be that a baby weeps within hearing, most pathetically. You will get tears in your eyes in sympathy. Why? There is an unseen bond between the two. Man alone has this quality of sympathy; he alone can be happy when others are happy, and miserable when others are miserable. That is why he is the paragon of creation, the acme of animal advance. Man alone is capable of *seva*; that is his special glory, unique skill.

You can serve God, only by serving man

Before the festivals of *Dhashara*, birthday and *Shivaraathri*, every year, I am exhorting you to take up the vow of *seva* as a spiritual *saadhana*. I must say that I am not satisfied with your performance yet. But, I have not given up instructing you and commissioning you for I am hoping that you will catch up with the ideal some day or other. This is an example of the quality of mercy that is natural to Me. That quality makes Me appreciate even the little attempts you make to practise the ideal of *seva*.

Why have you come such long distances, braving all the expenses and troubles of the journey? To be in My presence and to win My Grace, isn't it? Why then do you seek other contacts, others' favour, once you have reached this place? Why fall into grooves that deny you My-presence and grace? Forget all else, and stick to the orders that I give; I want only to initiate you into the spiritual path of *seva* and love. Do not be ashamed that you have been asked to watch a heap of sandals, or carry water to the thirsty, or stand at the gate. The privilege and pleasure consists in the use to which you put your skill and time for helping others. You long for serving Me. Let Me tell you, serving those who serve Me gives Me as much satisfaction as serving Me. Serving anyone is serving Me, for, I am in all.

The relief and joy that you give to the sick and the sad, reach Me, for I am in their hearts, and I am the One they call out for. God has no need of your service; does he suffer from pain in the legs, or ache in the stomach? Try to serve the godly; be *dhaasaanudhaasas*---*servant* of the servants of the Lord. The service of man is the only means by which you can serve God.

Serve the people with humility and efficiency

Everyone of you has, I know, the yearning to do *Faadhaseva* (fondly massaging My feet). And, if I give the chance to all who are anxious to get it, what will happen to My feet? And, what a rush there will be around Me! In the very nature of things, all those who yearn cannot be satisfied. But, know My feet are everywhere. *Sarvathaah paani paadham*--"In all places, His Hands, His Feet" says Geetha. The *Purusha Suuktah* of the *Vedhas* says: *Sahasra Seershaa, Purushah, Sahasraakshah, Sahasrapaadh*---"The Supreme Sovereign Person has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet." The heads, eyes and feet of the thousands who gather here, are My Heads, My Eyes and My Feet. Nurse them, respect them, attend to their needs---you have done your *japam, dhyaanam, and puuja!*

The *manthra* says, *Sarva dheva namaskaarah Keshavam prathi gachchathi*---"The homage that you pay to all the Gods flows towards the One only, Keshava." I would elaborate it further and give you this new *manthra*: *Sarva jeeva namaskaarah Keshavam prathi gachchathi*---"The reverence, the service that you offer to every single being (*jeeva*) flows automatically to the One, namely, Keshava." What does *Keshava* mean? It means the Supreme Godhead, whose one hair represents the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva---the Creative, the Conserving and the Disintegrating potencies of the Divine.

Serve the people who will gather here, with love and intelligence, humility and efficiency. Then, when they return to their villages, they will tell their kith and kin, "The people we met at Prashaanthi Nilayam treated us much more lovingly than any close relative; they seated us in the shade; they came to us often to inquire about our health; they brought the doctor to us; they gave medicine when someone was ill; they spoke soft and sweet, whenever we asked for some information."

Respect everyone, no one is small or low

The badge does not endow you with authority to boss over those who are badgeless. It should not be insulted by harshness, pride or persecution. Once you have been blessed by it, you should not indulge in loose talk, or loose living, lewd behaviour, or evil habits like smoking, gambling, drinking and scandalising others. You cannot attain positions of leadership, if that is your ambition, without years of sincere seva to the people. Unless you build your career on that foundation, leadership will be but a five-year fair!

Let me tell you some details of the seva you can do here: See that old persons and the sick do not sit in the hot sun; supply drinking water, without fuss, to all who need it; watch out for unsocial elements and pick-pockets who come sooner than even the devotees, in order to realise the debts they have paid in previous births! Arrange for groups who will go on the rounds of the area and the sheds at night, to see that everything is secure and safe. Take all precautions to preserve the cleanliness of the area and also, maintain the quietness of the atmosphere.

Don't shout at people who shout, in your attempt to see that silence is maintained. Talk low yourself and advise others to talk low. Explain to those who speak aloud why they have to lower their voice. If the reason is explained, they will sympathise with you and understand the purpose. Respect everyone and talk as if they are worthy of the highest respect you are capable of. No one is small or low. Sai is in all, and if you insult any one, it is an insult directed 'against Sai. Don't drag away children that start wailing loud, soothe them, softly. Engage yourselves in bringing solace to the bodily ill. I shall engage myself in giving solace to the mental and spiritually ill.

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The name of the Lord must always be pronounced with joy, thankfulness, exultation, awareness of the uniqueness and the splendour. Say it with love, say it with sincere yearning.

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