

#### **4. Naaraayana seva**

THE gift of food is the noblest of all gifts. You have today arranged the feeding of a large number of people and thus justified the name of this village. The years of life allotted to man is very short; the world in which he lives is very wide; time extends far behind and far beyond. What little man has to do here has to be done quickly, at the place that is assigned to him within the time that is allotted to him. And, man has such a formidable task before him; it is to fulfil it that he has come as man, exchanging for this human habitat, all the merit he has acquired during many past lives. The task is no less than the manifestation of the Divinity latent in man. The easiest and the most pleasant means by which this can be accomplished is *seva*---the service of man, done in a spirit of dedication and devotion. And, in villages like this, *Seva* (service) is a potent and profitable discipline. And, the best type of *seva* is feeding the hungry. The first step in this discipline is the establishment of mutual help and co-operation in all *seva* activities among the residents. This will ensure peace, security and prosperity for the village.

#### **Pollution of character is spreading in cities**

A single homestead cannot make a village; many have to cluster together and live as one family in order to constitute a village. And, for such *seva* as you are doing, each homestead and every member thereof has to lend a helping hand and achieve success in the common venture. The physical strength, the monetary resources, the intelligence of all have to be pooled in order to make the project succeed. This garland has not happened out of a single flower; many flowers of different hues and fragrances have strung themselves around the string in order to achieve the common aim of decorating the picture of person. No one in the village can stand apart and say, "This work is not mine; it is the responsibility of that man or this group."

For, today, the Cities have taken a turn towards confusion and conflict; they have no peace, no security, no calmness. It is all agitation, anxiety, fear, faction and suspicion. It is only in villages like yours that a modicum of quietness, fellow-feeling, tolerance, and truth can be found. The pollution of character that is spreading in cities is fast invading the villages also. The villages should not yield to the temptation of imitation and invite catastrophe on themselves. They must appreciate the ancient Indian ideals of simplicity and sincerity, service and spirituality-oriented living. You must curb greed and anger, envy and pride, and live in amity and the spirit of brotherhood. Then India will be happy and prosperous. Each one must carry out the duties of his role in a worshipful attitude.

#### **Deserve the Grace of God by helping the weak**

I see that only a few young persons and elders are running about and carrying on the various tasks this function entails. This is the case in most villages. If all do not share in the cost, the village cannot benefit. Life has been bestowed not for just eating and digesting, roaming and reclining, but, for a far greater purpose---the realisation of the Divinity in us, in all that exist around us and even beyond all things that strike our senses, To waste such a life in vain pursuits, and in mere sense-pleasures is not the sign of an intelligent person. Deserve the Grace of God by helping the weak and poor, the diseased and the disabled, the distressed and the downtrodden. Do not laugh at others or take delight in insulting them or in carrying tales demeaning them. There is no more heinous sin than hurting the feelings of others. Man must develop two qualities: Fear of sin and devotion to God.

To cultivate devotion to God, always endeavour to mix with good persons, engage yourselves in *Naamasmarana* (in the early hours of the day, join the choir groups that sing the names of God and move along the streets thrilled with the joy that wells up when you do so). You have a few temples in the village, make them active, and alive. Gather there for an hour each day and sing *bhajans* (group singing of devotional songs on Lord's Names and glory}. Why waste time or even pollute time, by talking ill of others? The eye, the hand, the nose, the head, the stomach, each looks different; each does one special task; each has different name and function. But they subserve the Interests of the one body to which they all belong, they do not work at cross-purposes, do they? So too, each of you is a limb in the body called the village. Do your work without a murmur; work in full co-operation with all. The village can be healthy and happy only then. Love, love alone can bind you to others and to God, who is the very embodiment of love.

You are referring to the gift of food as *Anna-dhaana* (the charity of food). But, no one has the authority to give In charity what has been given by God or be proud of it or even to feel that he has given something In charity. God gave the rains, God fostered the sapling and God ripened the grain; what right have you to call it yours and give it in charity? It is not *dhaana* (charity) that you do; you are only offering gratitude to God; you are sanctifying the grain you have harvested by offering the food prepared out of it to these *Naaraayanas* (Gods in human form). Call it *Naaraayana Seva!* That will be more correct. Anyway, since you are doing it with love and humility, in spirit of Divine worship, I have come to your village to bless you. Do not cast all responsibility on a committee, or a group of enthusiasts; join them wholeheartedly and offer to share the burden. I want everyone to join in this *Naaraayana Seva and* that it should be done, not once a month as now, but even at more frequent Intervals.

*Sore-Hunise Village, 28-1-1975*