

16. Ceiling on desires - II

WE have undertaken tasks of varying magnitudes and description. Before we embark on the execution of these programmes we have to ask ourselves three questions. One: for whose sake are we undertaking these programmes? Two: For what purpose? Three: How are we going to execute these programmes? These may be three different questions, but the answer is one. If we examine deeply, the answer to the first question is: "All for our own *sake*." The answer to the second is: "For our own happiness and joy." The answer to the third question is that "the results of our work will depend on what we do. If we do something good, the result will be good, if we do something bad, the result will be likewise."

In this world it is not possible to make use of anything without transforming it in one way or the other to make it useful. You cannot have rice for eating without converting paddy to rice grains and then cooking it. Similarly, you cannot have cloth without transforming cotton into yarn and then weaving it into cloth. Similarly, a human being needs transformation in respect of three things: The first is bodily transformation; the second pertains to the mind; the third relates to the *Aathma*. The *Aathma* (Divine Soul) is changeless. It is only the body and the mind that require transformation. How does transformation take place? For instance, if we ask the question whether silver can become God or stone become God, the answer is 'YES.'

We are not aware of our internal impurities

When a sculptor converts a piece of rock into a beautiful idol to be worshipped in a shrine, what was inert and worthless becomes sacred. This is transformation. Similarly, an idol made out of silver becomes an object of worship. In the same manner, everything which is petty and worldly can be transformed in course of time into something sacred and divine. Such a transformation is necessary for man.

Take, for instance, the body. It is an entity which houses much that is bad and that is undesirable. Externally we take great care of the body through bathing and cleaning. We are aware of the external impurity and we try to get rid of it. But, are we aware of the internal impurities? How do we purify them? For this internal purification, we have to acquire sacred thoughts and do sacred deeds. We have the concepts of *Jeeva* (individual being) and *Dheva* (celestial being). Man is composed of the three *Gunas* (qualities), *Sathwa*, *Rajas*, *Thamas* (serenity, restless activity, inactivity). As long as you are part of these *Gunas*, you are *Jeeva*. Once you transcend these three qualities you become *Dheva* (God). The three *Gunas* are like the husk that covers the rice in the paddy. When you remove the husk it becomes the rice-grain. Whatever we do, whatever actions we undertake, if they were to be permeated with thoughts centred on God, they would become sacred. Today in our *seva* (selfless service) activities, we do not have this lofty sense of dedication. We should get rid of the thought that *seva* activities are being done for others. You should understand that they are being undertaken for your own sake and for your own betterment.

Four ways we should try to change ourselves

In *Vedhaanthic* parlance this identification of yourself with others is called *Maithri*. In *seva* activities you have to develop *Maithri* (friendliness). Another attitude you have to develop is *Karuna* (compassion). The third is called *Mudhitha* (contented) and the fourth is called *Upeksha* (indifferent to results). In all these four ways we should try to change ourselves and others.

What is *Maithri*? It is commonly equated with friendship. In the worldly sense this friendship is a mutual relationship. True friendship lies in regarding other people's comforts or joys or sorrows as your own. For instance we have an example in Raamaayana in the relationship between Raama and Sugreeva. Their friendship was based on the fact that each could experience the suffering of the other as his own (*Samaana avastha*). The bond of friendship is drawn when there is a recognition of sharing of experiences common to both.

What is *Karuna* (compassion)? Seeing a person in distress and expressing verbally sympathy is not compassion. Compassion must express itself in action to relieve the suffering. Nor should you adopt an attitude of aloofness or indifference on the plea that each one is suffering for his own folly. Though suffering may be due to one's mistakes--mistakes to which everyone is prone--we should seek to remedy such suffering just as we try to get rid of our own suffering. Some people try to show off their sympathy by setting up charitable institutions like hospitals, etc.

True compassion should emanate from the heart. It should not find expression in outward manifestations which only reveal one's vanity. In the Sathya Sai Organisations there is no place for such demonstrations of vanity. Everything that is done to help the poor or the suffering should be based on the feelings coming from the heart and appealing to the hearts of those who are helped.

Process of freeing yourself from bondage

Next comes *Muditha*. This means acquiring peace of mind through cultivating equanimity in the experience of honour and dishonour, praise or calumny, loss or gain, joy or sorrow. These pairs of opposites should be regarded as things which come and go, like passing clouds. Every *Sevak* (volunteer) should develop such an equanimity of mind.

The fourth requisite is *Upeksha*. *Apeksha* (craving for the fruits) binds man. *Upeksha* (indifferent to results) frees man. *Apeksha* means involvement with the worldly concerns. *Upeksha* means getting rid of this involvement. Take the example of a pumpkin. A green pumpkin, when it is placed in water, it sinks. The pumpkin has plenty of water within it and when placed in water it sinks. The same pumpkin, when it is dried and has no water inside it, floats on water. What is the reason? In the first place the pumpkin has friendship for water and it makes water part of its own self. Similarly, when you are worldly yourself and you move in the world you are bound to it. When you free yourself from worldly attachments you go towards divinity and you are freed from bondage to the world. It is the process of "freeing yourself" that is called "Upeksha."

When you are tied to *kaama* you cannot get Raama

In the Raamaayana, when Raama decided to go to the forest, Seetha wanted to accompany him and she gave away all her possessions. By giving up attachments to the possessions she could get Raama. But, when in the forest she developed a desire for the golden deer, she was separated from Raama. In the first place when she removed Kaama (the desire for possessions) she became one with Raama. The meaning of this episode is, so long as you are tied to Kaama, you cannot hope to get Raama or God.

This does not mean that you have to renounce the world. Living in this world as you are, you must strike a balance between worldly life and spiritual life. Man's life is like gold in its native state, associated with dirt, which is impure. It is impure in the initial stages. When you begin to purify your thoughts, speech and actions through seeking good contacts and cultivating noble ideas, you will be transforming yourself. This is the process of *Upeksha*.

More than *Thapas* (penance) *Dhyaana* (meditation), service to others is the means by which one transforms oneself. In rendering service, you should be moved by genuine concern for those you serve. You should try to ascertain the cause of their suffering and try to remove it. Only then can you do *seva* (selfless-service) properly. Momentary sympathy or charity or competing with others in exhibiting one's generosity is not true *seva*. In rendering service if you try to do something which is beyond your capacity it is a sign of your ego. If you give less than what you can, then you are a thief (denying to others what is due to them). You must be discriminating in your service. You must regard service as a *saadhana* (spiritual effort).

Do not do *seva* to please others

You should believe that service is a path to God realisation. These activities are to be undertaken not for the sake of Sathya Sai or even for the sake of society. They are purely and essentially for your own sake. It is to transform your own lives that you undertake *seva*. Through the medium of *seva* you can reap the fruits of *japa* and *dhyaana*. By making your fellow-beings happy you are making God Himself happy.

The *seva* that you do, should not be done out of a sense of compulsion or to please others. It should be wholehearted and spontaneous. In organising *seva* activities do not attempt to compare one State with another. Because some States have taken up some work in some villages, you should not feel that you should do the same thing. Do whatever you feel is your duty and what is necessary for the areas in which you are working. Do it with all your heart without comparing yourself with others.

There is the programme connected with Ceiling on Desires. You must realise that this programme has not been launched to raise funds. The object of the programme is to prevent waste of money, time, food or other resources and to use all these for the welfare of the people. The money that is saved need not be kept for the Sathya Sai Organisations. It may be used in the best way you choose for the benefit of others. Do not waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God. Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking *seva* activities in a pure and unselfish spirit.

Aims of the "Ceiling on Desires" programme

Today we waste time on unnecessary and unwanted things, in indulging in unnecessary talk and doing meaningless actions. In all these actions we are sacrificing the body to time. Instead we should try to make time our servant. It means spending our time in good thoughts and good deeds. Every second of your daily existence you must ask these questions "How am I utilising time? Is it for a good or bad purpose?"

Likewise, with regard to food you must ask: "Am I just eating what I need or more? Am I wasting food?" So also with regard to money: "Am I using this money for my own selfish needs or for boosting my name and fame, or to satisfy my ego and vanity?" Once you start seeking answers to these questions, there is no greater *saadhana*.

These are the aims of the "Ceiling on Desires" programme. It was never the purpose of this programme to collect money for the Sathya Sai Organisations. The object was to encourage you to share your money with others, to give you an opportunity to utilise your surplus resources for some good and noble purpose which will sanctify your life.

Three types of strength are given to a person: physical strength, mental strength and the power of money. It has been said that all these should be offered as *yajna* (sacrifice). This sacrifice is not

offered to God. God, who has given you the body and the mind, does not need them for himself. God is also the source of all wealth. What does He want with your wealth? Use it for sacred purposes. The seva programme is intended only to provide you with opportunities to make your lives sacred and worthwhile. It is to develop the spirit of sacrifice.

Understand the basic purpose of all service activities

Was it beyond the power of Raama to discover Seetha in Lanka Himself? What need was there for Him to send Hanumaan? Raama wanted Hanumaan to go on the search, so that He could show to the world the devotion and steadfastness and faith of Hanumaan. It is a case of Grace on the part of Raama. In the same manner, if Sai so much as wants to do so many things Himself, He could do anything. This endeavour is not for the sake of Sai. It is done through these *Seva* Organisations so that members of the organisation get the chance to do service and redeem themselves. Try to understand the basic truth that these avenues of service have been provided so that you will get good name for yourselves and not for the sake of Sai.

If people have any wrong notions about the service programme, endeavour to remove their doubts and explain the real purposes. For instance, some people say for the sake of the 60th Birthday Celebrations they have embarked on this project of "Ceiling on Desires." This is a wrong notion. Tell these people it is not so. Sathya Sai does not need anything and He does not ask anything from you. Our idea is that we should undertake some development programme, so that the villages can get benefited. The idea is to save money that is now being wasted in one way or the other, so that it may be made available for doing something good. Above all, the basic purpose of all service activities is to effect a transformation from the state of man to the state of Divinity. Fill your hearts with that which is godly. Then there will be meaning to your volunteer service.

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Bhaaratheeya culture has emphasised the valid ways in which one has to spend energy and money for service of the distressed, the diseased, the hungry, the illiterate, the ill-housed, the ill-clothed. Bharatheeya culture condemns the spending of energy and money for pomp, for vengeance, for competitive faction, for material triumphs. Wealth is to be held on trust and used for promoting the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God.

Bharatheeya culture also lays down that nothing should be done to damage any one's faith in God or in his own self.

Faith is a tender plant and it needs all the nurture that you can give.

Sri Sathya Sai