

22. Practise what you preach

THE quest for God does not mean doing *bhajans*, *japa* worship and the like. These are merely means for achieving mental concentration and subduing desires and aversions. Why cry out, asking: "Where is God?" He resides in the heart. Offer service and receive Love. Thereby experience the bliss of Self-realisation.

In the land of Bharat two great streams of Higher Wisdom have been flowing from ancient times. One is Vedic wisdom. In this, the *Karma Kanda* (rituals) is primary. It has its origin in *Bhrahman*. The *Rishis* receded the *Vedic* intimations and propagated their message. The second stream is the scriptural heritage of the Puranas. In this Duty is paramount. The *Rishis* acquired them and spread their message. Both these streams are of equal validity.

The goal of *karma* is *Jnana* and for *Jnana*, *karma* is the base. To combine the two in practice constitutes *Seva*. Through right conduct, the mind is purified and a pure mind leads to *Atmic* bliss. Hence, the duties that are enjoined on one have to be discharged. The foremost duty of man is to do good deeds with a pure heart. There should, however, be no egoistic feeling. "I have done these good deeds." It is not right to entertain the slightest desire for enjoying the fruits of these actions. Egoism and desire are the cause of bondage to Karma. Desire is the barrier between the pure mind and devotion to the Self. To regard the performance of right action as one's duty and to eschew egoism in one's conduct and desire in one's motives is real sacrifice.

True meaning of *Karma Yoga*

Karma yoga teaches how actions should be performed. It enjoins duty for duty's sake. "*Yogah Karmasu Kausalam*" (*Yoga* is excellence in action). It enables man to recognise the image of the Divine in him. Righteous action and control of the senses are essential for the cultivation of universal love and goodness. It is the foundation for the good life.

Not all realise the true meaning of *Karma yoga*. Many look down upon acts like cleaning of streets, relief to the sick, feeding the hungry, and service to the poor and the destitute as undignified. This is a grievous mistake. The supreme Lord of the three worlds, Sri Krishna Himself when He came down to proclaim the divine destiny of man, rendered service to beasts and birds. He tended horses and cows with love. In the great Kurukshetra war, disinclined to wield the sword, He was content to figure as a mere charioteer. He made known thereby the ideal of selfless service.

Service to the society is the highest good

The underlying truth of *Karma Yoga* is the demonstration of the unity that subsumes the diversity in the universe. *Nishkama Karma* (desireless action) demonstrates and promotes the Love principle. There is no greater spiritual *sadhana* than service. The tendency to distinguish between the spiritual path, the path of service and the path of knowledge and regard them as separate is wrong. The three are not distinct; they are one. *Seva* (service) is spiritual knowledge. *Seva* is the primary means to acquire Divine Grace. Without being a devoted follower you cannot become a worthy leader. Without being a *Kinkara* (one who is ready to do any work) you cannot become a *Sankara* (The Divine). Each one has to realise this truth. Service to society is the highest good. It adds to the joy of life and enhances its savour like salt.

Universal love sweetens life like nourishing food. The joy of giving makes life blissful. The *Dhyana* (meditation) that is sustained by life is the real lifebreath. Life requires four elements.

Ruchi (sweetness), *pushti* (strength), *sugandham* (fragrance) and *prana* (vital breath). The unity of these four makes up the human entity. When you sit down for a meal, if there

is no salt in the *dhal*, you keep it aside. If that is the case, should not there be some sweetness and taste in a life led for sixty or seventy years? What is it that gives savour to human existence? Good qualities alone impart savour to life. Good conduct alone is the right source of strength to a man. A man without good conduct becomes a weak and pitiable creature. Again, good qualities like forbearance and sacrifice lend fragrance to the life of a man. Without good qualities, righteous actions and the attitudes of forbearance and sacrifice, life is worth nothing.

The Light of Seva

Sai's philosophy does not lie in encouraging devotees to sit in a corner, control their breath and go on uttering, "*Soham! Soham! Soham!*"

"Oh, Sadhak! Arise! gird up your loins! Plunge into social service!" This is the Sai message. No room should be given for laziness and indifference. Controlling your senses you should take to social service. A life not dedicated to service is like a dark temple. It is the abode of evil spirits. Only the light of Seva can illumine the spiritual aspirant.

Therefore embark upon service to your fellow men without any expectation of reward. Do not waste your time in profitless talk. Of what avail is it to mouth expressions such as: the Lord is All-knowing, Omnipresent and Omnipotent? You clap your hands when these epithets are used, delving pleasure from simply hearing them. How many act according to the word they speak? There must be harmony between what is-said and what is done. All spiritual exercises *like japa* and *dhyana* are efforts to control the mind and prepare it for the journey to the Divine. Knowing the way is not enough. The path must be traversed to reach the destination. That journey is service to the society. This service must be done with the awareness that the Divine dwells in every heart, in every individual and in every living thing.

In the Bharatiya tradition one of the beautiful names of Bhagavan is "*Sarvabhootha-antaratma*" - the Self is the indweller in all living beings. To worship this Supreme Self residing in all beings and to experience this Self no separate temple or shrine is necessary. The body is verily the temple of God. The eternal Self resides in this temple of the body as the Divine that sustains the individual Jiva (self). Forgetting this truth men beautify only the temple and are concerned only about its external appearance. They do not consider the basic Divine Indweller who sustains everything.

Grama Seva is Rama Seva

The body is not primary. What is important is the Indwelling Spirit. Keeping the goal of self-realisation in view, you must engage yourselves in service till the destination is reached. Selfless, dedicated, purehearted service is the means. When the entire life is devoted to this purpose, direct experience of the Divine can take place. Eschew as far as possible attachments and aversions. Every effort must be made to keep the mind and body unpolluted.

Know, oh man, Grama Seva is Rama Seva!

When love overflows it is Rama Rajya

There is no progress without Love

Without Service there is no hope for man.

It is through service that man can expect to redeem his life. He is not a man at all who has no kindness and love in him. The path to Self-realisation lies through Love and Service. Cultivation of love is the first step. Faith is the basis for Love. When Faith and Love are combined Peace is attained. And in that Peace resides Truth. Truth reveals the power of *Thyaga* (sacrifice), which alone holds the key to immortality.

Self-confidence is the basis of faith. How can a man who is not sure about his own future over the next few days, have faith in God? Only the man who has faith in himself can have faith in God. Nara (man) is Narayana and Narayana is *Nara*. Love is the link that binds the two. With love as the motive force and *seva* as the means, the aspirant should seek to attain the supreme goal of life.

Practice and Precept

Embodiments of love! You have participated in many conferences, but what have you accomplished thereby? Without putting into practice the decision taken, what is the use of endless debates and long resolutions? Conferences of such a nature are a sheer waste of time and money. You must try to implement at least one or two of the decisions. There is no use in listening to talks if you do not make use of knowledge gained from them after you go out from the Conference.

Nowadays even avowedly spiritual organisations are involved in business. Sathya Sai organisations should never become such commercial institutions. The only kind of commerce in which they can indulge is from *heart to heart, from love to love*. It is in such a sublime exchange that they should take part. They should have no financial or other material involvement. Organisations which get entangled in money or property do not grow. We should be concerned with genuine, God-oriented, heart-to-heart association. *Seva* must be done hand in hand in comradeship. This will demonstrate the unity of the Cosmic Being. The heart does not blossom out through the mere study of books or by listening to discourses. It is only the cultivation of love that breaks the knots binding the heart. One who does no service himself has no right to call upon others to serve. The right to speak has to be earned by doing service. *Seva* must be regarded as *sadhana* and service rendered to any one must be looked upon as service to God. To develop such an attitude of spontaneous love towards those whom one serves should be the primary aim of Sai organisations.

Selfless Service

If there is no spirit of sacrifice in the *Bhajan* or meditation you do, however earnestly you may do it, it becomes a self-interested exercise. There is self-interest in seeking one's *Moksha* (salvation). To seek only your future is equally selfish. To be concerned about your own *Ananda* (bliss) is also selfishness. Only the man who gives up his self-interest and regards the happiness of others as his own and devotes himself to their well-being, is a truly selfless person. The Lord will love only those who love others. If you seek to win the Lord's Love, you must have to love others. You cannot win the love of others if you do not love them. Without worrying about what has happened in the past and without concern for the future, strive to make the best use of the present by cultivating love and doing service.

Many reasons are given for the problems in the world which we face today. But the root causes are really two. The old ruminates over the past and spend their time expatiating on the good old times when they were young and recalling all their achievements and enjoyments. As for the

youth, they are engaged in imagining fanciful plans for their future after their studies and their service careers. The future is in fact unpredictable. No one knows for certain what the morrow will bring. What use is there in worrying about the unknown? The old, absorbed in the past, and the young, concerned about the future, are both ignoring the present. This is the real problem. We should really be concerned about the Diane present. Only if you make the present holy and pure, can you attain goodness and purity in the future.

Experience divinity through *Seva*

Hence, avail yourself of the golden opportunity that has come to you now, without misusing it, and redeem your lives by engaging in service. Through *Seva* you can experience dignity and inexpressible bliss. You can be an ideal to others.

Sathya Dharma, Shanthi Prema and Ahimsa are in us like the *pancha pranas* (five vital airs). We think that the five *pranas* (*Prana, Apana, Udana, Samana* and *Vyana*) are protecting this body. But it is Truth, Right Conduct, Love, Peace and Non-violence which give real happiness to the body. These are the real *Pancha Pranas*. In no circumstances should these five vital principles be departed from or given up. Render service to society with these principles in your mind and with broad-minded dedication to the well-being of all. That alone will please Sai. Sai rejoices when *seva* is done. All that Sai does or says is *Seva*. By acting according to what Sai says and does, I hope you will delve the joy of the Self.

You have come here from distant parts of the world, at great expense and personal inconvenience. Having come, you should try to imbibe good thoughts and noble feelings so that you may go back with the determination to lead exemplary lives and engage yourselves in worthy deeds which make your lives sublime. This is my benediction for you all. Before I conclude, I wish to give you two directives which will make you understand the significance of this Conference. One is: *Practise what you preach. Act according to what you say.* The other is: *Don't preach what you do not practice. If you talk about something which you do not practise yourself it is deceit. If you do what you say, it is an index of greatness.*

Vyasa has said: *"If you cannot do what you talk about, that is sin. To do what you say is purity."* Remember the significance of these two statements and carry on your work in a spirit of dedication. Remember that world welfare and peace cannot be achieved without selfless service to mankind.

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