

30. Service as duty

THE cosmos is permeated by the Divine. Hence it is the field of all actions. *Karma* or action means the Life Force. Human beings are instruments of this Life Force. The human body is made up of action. Consequently the scriptures described man as *Karmajaa*, (born as a result of action). All actions performed by man with his limbs and organs are rendered possible by the Divine. Hence man should regard all actions as sacred.

But whatever man does is motivated by ego, self-interest, and desire for the fruits thereof. To enjoy the fruits of the actions done with expectation of reward, man is reborn. The Gita says: "*Karmaanubandheeni Manushyaloke*" (*Karma* is the bond in this world of human beings). Man is bound by *Karma*. When actions are performed as offerings to the Divine, they get sanctified. All actions that are natural to man should be converted by the spiritual aspirant into *Karma Yoga*. The distinction *between Karma and Karma Yoga* should be clearly understood. Actions performed selfishly with egoism and desire for reward are *Karmas* (that bind). Actions done unselfishly, without ego and any expectation of reward, become *Karma Yoga*. Each one can determine for himself whether he is a *Karma Yogi* or a *Karma-Brashta* (a wrong-doer) or a *Karmaadhikari* (competent to perform *karmas*). Every man's life is filled with actions. But together with activities associated with self-interest, every man should also take part in service activities. Every man's primary aim should be to devote himself to selfless activities. Man has been endowed with the human body for rendering service to others. This is an ancient maxim. Through service to others, divinity can be experienced.

Joy and sorrow are inseparable companions

Society is composed of the affluent, the middle class and the poor. Social service means service to one's fellowmen. A wealthy man has been able to acquire riches only with the help of others. Realising this, he has a duty to extend help to others in need. Man derives his strength from three sources: wealth, knowledge and the physique. The power derived from these sources should be used properly for right ends.

The term *vithamu* (wealth) is usually applied to material riches. But it applies equally to the wealth of knowledge and to physical strength. One having this triple strength should devote it for the well-being of society. Joy and sorrow are like the two pots carried by a man on a pole. They are inseparable companions. No one can tell what the future has in store for any person.

A millionaire may become a pauper and vice versa. These are familiar phenomena. They occur in the course of nature. Whatever sacrifices or ceremonies one may perform, these vicissitudes cannot be avoided altogether. These changes in fortune are wrought by the whirligig of Time. Recognising this, one should ensure that one's actions are righteous and helpful to others.

Serve the Daridra Narayana

When feeding the poor, the rich people think that they are rendering service to *Daridra Narayana*. Who is *Daridra Narayana*? People think that anyone who is without food, clothing or shelter is a *Daridra Narayana*. But in rendering service to the poor, people should feel that they are serving the Narayana (the Lord) who dwells in the hearts of the poor. To endow this form (of *Daridra Narayana*) to the formless Divine and serve

men in this way is the means of sanctifying one's actions and redeeming one's life. God will dwell in the hearts of those who are filled with thoughts of consideration for the poor and who are eager to serve them.

Time is infinitely precious. Hence the performance of good deeds should not be put off to another day. Time waits for no one. Hence both the body and the time should be utilized for doing sacred actions.

There should be no feeling of condescension in rendering service. Regard yourself as a devoted servant ready to do any task. Service activities done in this spirit will lead to God realisation by extinguishing the ego.

There is no meaning in preaching spirituality to a starving man. Feed the hungry. Offer solace and encouragement to those in distress and despair. The educated should try to teach the illiterate and open the minds of the ignorant to wider vistas of knowledge. The educated persons may be doctors, lawyers or businessmen. Doctors should be ready to render free medical service to the poor. Lawyers should be helpful to those who are in need of legal aid but who cannot afford to pay for their services. Businessmen should be content to keep a reasonable income for their needs and utilize the surplus for charitable purposes. It is rare to find such persons. The wealthy should realise that money should be earned by righteous means and used for right purposes. True happiness can be got only from wealth acquired by fair means. Money got through exploitation of others will lead to suffering in one way or another.

Ingratitude is a grievous sin

If you desire a safe and peaceful future, you have to mould your actions properly in the present. In this, service has a great role. Whether you perform any kind of worship or not, when you render selfless service, you will be able to experience the bliss of Divine love. Service demonstrates the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. To realise your own inherent divinity, service to the people is the best kind of *sadhana*. What is so great about living for one's own sake? Only the man who lives for others can be said to live truly.

Man is a creature of society and owes everything to society. Hence he should be grateful to it for what all he has received from it. Gratitude is a supreme virtue. Ingratitude is a grievous sin. It will deprive a man of his God-given sight. There is no means of atonement for the ungrateful person. If you wish to safeguard your future, you have to be grateful to those who have helped you in your difficulties and needs in the present.

In the Sathya Sai Organization, *seva* (service) has pride of place. The Sai *samithis* were started only with service in view. Services should not be mechanical or enforced. It should be filled with love and rendered whole-heartedly. Whomsoever you may serve, regard it as service done to God.

It can be asserted as a fact that only in the Sathya Sai Organizations is service rendered without any feeling of egoism.

Penance of devotees at Prashaanthi Nilayam

If today lakhs of people are gathered here and are putting up with various inconveniences and difficulties, it is indeed a great penance they are doing. This sense of oneness cannot be seen in any other organization. Only the Sathya Sai Organizations have such oneness. You see here people belonging to many countries, professing many faiths, speaking various languages,

behaving like brothers and sisters and experiencing the bliss of being here. This is possible only for those belonging to the Sathya Sai Organizations.

Embodiments of Divine Love/You must all take a pledge to develop this feeling of love and set an example to the world. It is not right to call yourselves *sevaks* without engaging yourselves in service and rest content with your own selfish concerns. Wherever you may be, render service with all your heart. Consider that in rendering service, you are serving yourselves and not others. That will confer on you *Atma-trupti* (self satisfaction). You must examine whether in doing service, you are deriving self-satisfaction or whether you are trying to show off. As long as there is ostentation in service, no real joy can be experienced from it. The ego will not go. And without the elimination of the ego, you cannot experience spiritual bliss.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! The world situation today is dreadful and frightening. Wherever you turn, fear confronts you. Whether you remain at home or go out into the street, whether you travel by train or walk on the road, fear haunts you. The world is enveloped in fear. If you want to banish this fear, you have to develop firm faith in God as the sole refuge. Then you are freed from fear. Shedding all fear, carry on your work with courage and determination, without any worry about the future, and plunge into service activities. If you act with this faith, you will be able to serve the nation well. It is not your intellectual ability that will serve to protect the country. If you adhere to Truth and Righteousness, they will protect both you and the country. Live up to the truth of your being. Act righteously.

Sai Service Organizations must grow in numbers and cover the entire country. Only then the country will enter on an era of prosperity. Consider yourselves as the children of one God. You are not strangers. You are not mere products of nature or of the physical elements. You are all sparks of the Divine. You must have only Divine thoughts.

Uniqueness of Sai Seva Organisations

Creation was the result of the Will of the Divine. Hence everything in creation should manifest its Divine nature. If you keep this fact in mind, you will be filled only with sacred thoughts and feelings and there will be no room for any wrong ideas. Always remembering that you are a fragment of the Divine you have to engage yourselves in service. No Government or other service organization has this attitude. Only Sathya Sai Organizations can render service successfully in this spirit. Very soon you will experience the bliss and peace to be got from such service.

Whatever the difficulties or obstacles, you are bound to overcome them. These are incidental to any undertaking. Do not bother about what has happened in the past. Get immersed in the tasks of the present. Render service with a pure and selfless heart. The delight of the individual gladdens the Divine. Equally the Divine esteems you. Do everything with the Lord's name on your lips. Develop all that is good in you and share that goodness with one and all.

Discourse to the Fifth World Conference of Sathya Sai Seva Organisations at the Hill View Stadium on 19-11-1990.

Individuals are prepared to engage themselves in various activities for the sake of their own personal comfort and for the acquisition of wealth and position and for ensuring the good of their kith and

*kin. But few of them are prepared to make any effort or sacrifice
for the general good of the society.*

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