

5. Graama Seva is Rama Seva

*Union is strength,
With unity anything can be achieved,
Like ants which collectively
Can destroy even a python.
The honour of a community
Rests on its morality.
Without morality the community
Loses its honour and name.
Only that can be called a community
In which morality is cherished.
Hearken! You noble sons of Bharath
To this profound truth.*

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit! Village Officers who have gathered here! If an individual is to progress, or a village is to develop or a nation is to be prosperous, social consciousness and the sense of unity are essential. Unity protects man. Disunity makes man a prey to worries of all kinds. "*Sanghe bali Kali Yuge*" (In union lies strength in the *Kali* Age). This adage proclaims that there is no greater strength than that derived from unity.

When we recall the past history of Bharath, we find that various invaders--Muslims, the Portuguese, the French and the British---overran the country and tried to change the ancient culture and institutions of the country. The nation did not lack men of valour or scholarship or eminent political leaders or men of science. But because there was no unity amongst them, the nation was subjected to various calamities.

Unity is the supreme need for Bharathiyas

Unity should be the supreme watchword for Bharathiyas. Freedom was achieved but not unity. This is because of the steady eclipse of an all-embracing vision. Parochial fanaticism, caste and religious dissension, and selfish and self-centred ambitions have combined to degrade human qualities to their nadir. Another potent factor responsible for the moral decline in the country is the absence of a feeling of national oneness and the regard for a common national culture.

In the Mahabharatha, Dharmaraja once made a significant declaration. He said, "When an outsider attacks our country, we will all stand as one, all the 105 of us (the hundred Kauravas and the five Pandava brothers). But when there are internal differences, only the five of us will be together." The lesson of this statement is that when the national interests are at stake, all in the country should be united as brothers. All should work in unison, but in matters affecting individuals, differences may remain.

The four pillars of national edifice

The situation in the country today demands that all Bharathiyas should unite as brothers to strive for the progress, the prosperity and the well-being of the nation. This means that in the interests

of the nation and the society, four things are essential: Equality, Unity, Co-operation and Fraternity. These are like four pillars of the national edifice. If any one of these is absent, the edifice will collapse. Hence, the people should cherish equality and unity.

For the divinity inherent in man, man himself is the authority. The term "Man" is derived from the term "Mind." Mind means an aggregation of thoughts. And thoughts account for the joys and sorrows experienced in daily life. Hence, it is only when the mind is filled with pure thoughts that human existence becomes meaningful.

When the headman in a village deems himself a servant of the village, he will be able to render selfless service. Can a person obsessed with power have a pure heart? No. Hence, the village chief should become the servant of the village.

The village officials are like a bridge between the Government and the people. It is only when this bridge is safe and sound that there can be good relations between the Government and the people.

When we speak about village officials, we should remember that in the villages *Graama Adhikari* (village officer) means one who has no antipathy towards anyone in the village. He is one who treats all alike. It is only when such terms are understood properly and people act accordingly that a person leads a meaningful existence.

On the vast ocean, countless waves appear. Each wave appears different from another. But despite these differences the waves are not different from the ocean. The waves arise from the ocean and are of the same stuff as the ocean. Likewise, although human beings appear different from each other, it has to be realised that all of them have emerged from the ocean of *Sath-chith-ananda*. Forgetting this truth and identifying themselves with the impermanent body, many are falling a prey to various troubles. For people who are caught up in the coils of mundane desires and pursuits, the beacon of spirituality is showing the path to emancipation. Spirituality is fundamental for man to reveal to him the means for the blossoming of his qualities.

Look upon the entire mankind as one family

Spirituality, however, does not mean leading a solitary, ascetic life. Spirituality means looking upon the whole of mankind as one family and realising the unity in diversity. This is the essence of Indian Culture.

This ancient culture, rooted in the villages, spread over the years to the cities. Today the situation is reversed. The practices of the cities are spreading to the villages. Modern education and modern ways of living cannot serve to improve the quality of life. People must ponder over the values of the culture that has come down to us from ancient times.

The well-being of the village determines the well-being of the nation. By providing the essential amenities for the people in the villages, promoting mutual co-operation amongst them and developing fraternal feelings among them, the progress of the village has to be ensured. At the individual level, there may be differences. But these should be set aside and all efforts concentrated on the development of the village as a whole.

When rain falls from the sky, the rain water is totally pure. But depending on the nature of the place where it falls, the name and form of the water become various. Likewise, there may be diversity among men on account of regional and other factors, but the historical reasons for this diversity will have to be borne in mind.

Conduct yourselves in an ideal and sacred manner

Embodiments of Divine Love! It is only when you equip yourselves well as village officials that the villagers will enjoy peace and prosperity. What is past is past. But the future is dependent on what you do in the present. Your actions in the present will determine the shape of things in the future. If you wish to secure a great future, you have to conduct yourselves in the present in an ideal and sacred manner.

If today such a large number of village officers have gathered here for a training programme, it must be regarded as an exemplary occasion. There may be differences and problems of various kinds among you as individuals. But setting them aside, you should concentrate on the promotion of national well-being. Regard the nation's welfare as your welfare. Entertain the sacred feeling that the nation's good is your good. There can be no nobler feeling than this for a human being. The true mark of a human being is the cultivation of a broad outlook. When you have such a vision, you can transform the national scene. The nation's welfare depends on the individual. The individual's welfare depends on the family. The welfare of the family is bound up with the condition of the village and so on right up to the national level. At the base of all is the individual. And only when all the individuals in a community act in unison can the society progress.

Unity, is, therefore, the essential means for accomplishing anything. Today senior officers from the district and the State capital and several Ministers have come here to launch this vital programme. I desire that all of you should extend your wholehearted co-operation to them so that the villages in this district may serve as an ideal example to the rest of the State.

There should be no place for factions

You must take note of one important factor. There are in the villages many factions and rival groups. Village officers should see that there is no room for these divisive forces. Today, in every village there are several factions. This is not good at all. The man who does not feel that this is his Motherland and has no love for his country or mother tongue is a soulless corpse. Every villager should feel proud of his village and feel himself one with everyone else in the village. You must strive your best to promote such a sense of unity.

The Minister admitted that the remuneration that was being offered to you is meagre. But you should not be swayed by this factor. When you discharge your duties well, your remuneration also will improve. Regardless of the remuneration, you must dedicate yourselves to the development of your respective villages. Whatever amenities you may need for doing your work, you should not resort to senseless methods like strikes for securing redress. Resorting to such methods means causing harm to the villages for securing selfish gains. Bandhs and strikes have become utterly senseless actions causing a great deal of inconvenience to the public. There is nothing heroic about these forms of agitation. They are disrupting the political fabric. If the village officers act with courage and devotion today, they can do a great deal of good to the people.

The role of village headmen

Act with courage and dedication to ensure the prosperity of the villages and strive to earn a good name for yourselves. This is the foremost task before you. In olden days, the village headman was regarded with great respect and looked upon as "the Lion of the village." This does not mean that he was lording over the villagers and terrorising them. Rather, he was their protector as the chief of the village.

Sri Diwakar Reddy (the Revenue Minister) said that the village officer was to the village what the Collector was for the district and a Minister was for the State. He has to properly discharge his duties with regard to collection of taxes and other matters. Village officers should consider themselves fortunate that this position has been conferred on them. They have to live up to the responsibility entrusted to them. If they pride themselves on their official status and ignore their responsibilities, they will be guilty of treason to the village and the nation.

Rights and duties are like two wheels of a cart

Men have both duties and rights, but today they are more concerned about rights than duties. Rights and duties are like the two wheels of a cart or the two wings of a bird. Both are essential. When duties are discharged properly, rights will be secured of their own accord. If everyone examines within himself how far he is carrying out his duties, he will realise how his rights are also protected.

In ancient times, when there were no minister or district officials, the village headman was all in all. He cared for the welfare of the villagers and the villagers lived in unity and harmony. Today, every family appears to be a house divided. There is no unity. If the five fingers in a hand do not function in unity, the hand will be useless. There are five qualities in man: *Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi, Prema* and *Ahimsa* (Truth, Right conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence). These human qualities have to be fostered. Today peace is absent because fear of sin and love of God have declined and man has degraded himself. If we have fear of sin, love of God and morality in society, mankind will be truly human and there will be harmony in society.

When you cultivate human qualities like compassion and love and act in unison with a sense of mutual regard and friendliness, you can render valuable service to the people. By your performance, you must make Anantapur district an example and an ideal for the whole of India.

Graama Seva is *Rama Seva* (Service to the village is service to God). There is no value in worshipping Rama if you do not serve your *Graama* (village) well. But if they have not installed Rama in their hearts, what use is there in building a temple for Rama? Sanctify your hearts and make the village a shrine in your hearts for the Lord. When you make service to the village your service to Sri Rama, you will be promoting your welfare in every way, economically, socially, morally and spiritually. You need not strive for salvation as a separate goal. Service to the village will itself ensure *Mukthi* (liberation). Bear this truth in mind and act up to it in your daily life. This is my message to all of you. I wish you all happiness, peace and prosperity.

Address to Village Administrative Officers from Anantapur district in the Institute Auditorium at Prashanthi Nilayam,

16 Feb 1992

When man is able to master the senses, and direct them along more beneficent channels--the eye seeing God's footprints in stars and rose petals, the ear hearing God's voice in the throats of birds and peals of thunder, the tongue tasting God's sweetness in all that appeals to it; the nose discovering fragrance in everything that recalls the glory of God, the sense of touch content to clasp the hand of the forlorn and the distressed as the beloved children of God -- then, he can visualise the God installed in the cavity of the

*heart; that is the lesson the five-hooded Sesha (divine serpent)
imparts!*

Sathya Sai Baba