

31. Lessons on seva saadhana

Society is the coming together of people. Cooperation among people in a society, motivated by spontaneity and by pure intentions, is the hall-mark of *seva* (service). *Seva* can be identified by means of two basic characteristics' Compassion and willingness to sacrifice.

History informs us that in all countries and in every age, man is a social animal. Man is born in society, he grows in and through society and his life ends in society itself. Man's songs and speech, his duties and diversions, are all determined by society. Society for man is like water for fish: if society rejects him or neglects him he cannot survive.

What a single individual cannot accomplish, a well-knit group or society can achieve. A man walking alone will feel tired and miserable at the end of five miles; but, walking with ten others as a group he would find the five miles a jaunt. He arrives refreshed and strong. Social living contributes increased happiness and more efficient effort among birds and beasts. They are able to defend themselves from enemies, secure food and shelter, migrate to places beyond great distances when they act as a group. Even ants have learn, that immense benefits are derivable from group activity and social organisation. Monkeys also live in groups for greater security and happier lives.

Let me tell you that nothing is impossible of achievement if an organised society is set on achieving it. Even liberation from material entanglement (*Moksha*) can be won through serving and promoting the progress of society. Through the sense of unity, the willingness to sacrifice and the softness of compassion, all objects can be gained. So, the Sathya Sai Organisation must move forward with hearty enthusiasm in the field of service to society.

Service must bring about uprooting of ego

The first lesson *in seva* has to be learnt in the family circle itself. Father, mother, brothers, sisters---in this limited group which is well knit, one must engage in loving service and prepare for the wider *seva* that awaits outside the home. The character of each individual member determines the peace and prosperity of the family; the character of each family is the basic factor that decides the happiness and joy of the village or the community. And, the nation's progress is based on the strength and happiness of the communities which are its components. So, for the welfare of the country and of the entire world, the spirit of service, vital enthusiasm, constructive imagination, pure motivation, and unselfish alertness are all urgently needed.

Take Hanumaan as your example in *seva*. He served Raama, the Prince of Righteousness, regardless of obstacles of all types. Though he was strong, learned and virtuous, he had no trace of pride. When asked who he was by the *raakshasaas* (demons) in Lanka into which he had entered so daringly, he described himself, in all humility, as the 'servant of Raama.' That is a fine example of uprooting of the ego which *seva* must bring about in us. No one can serve another while his ego is rampant. The attitudes of mutual help and selfless service develop the 'humanness' of man and help the unfoldment of the divinity latent in him.

Krishna was known to all as almighty, all-knowing, all encompassing and all-fulfilling. Yet, the enthusiasm to do *seva* prompted him to approach Dharmaraaja, the eldest of the Paandava brothers, on the eve of the magnificent *Raajsooya Yaaga* he had planned to celebrate and offered to take up *seva* of any kind. He suggested that he might be given the task of cleaning the dining

hall after the guests have partaken of the feast! Krishna insisted on outer cleanliness and inner cleansing. Clean clothes and clean minds are the ideal combination.

During the battle of Kurukshetra, which climaxed the Mahaabhaaratha story, Krishna served as the 'driver' of the chariot of Arjuna throughout the day on the field and when dusk caused the adjournment of the fight, he led the horses to the river, gave them a refreshing bath and applied healing balms to the wounds suffered by them during the fierce fray. He mended the reins and the harness and rendered the chariot battleworthy for another day.

Seva rendered to every living being is Saadhana

The Lord sets the example for the devotees to follow. He teaches that service done to any living being is offered to Him only and is accepted by Him most joyfully. Service rendered to cattle, to beasts, to men is laudable *saadhana*. Keeping the environment of our residences clean, providing help to those who live around the place, going to hospitals and serving the patients who are in the wards---in such acts of service the members of the Sathya Seva Organisation must take active part. Many do such things now as 'social service,' not as a *saadhana* in a fullhearted manner. The *saadhana* spirit is not found in the activity.

Through *seva saadhana*, Hanumaan attained identity with Raama, as the river attains identity with the sea. Arjuna too considered every act as *saadhana* to attain the grace of Krishna, for Krishna directed him to fight on, ever keeping Him in *memory*---"*Maamanusmara Yuddhyacha.*" You too should keep God ever in your mind as the pace-setter, whether you are serving patients in the hospitals or cleaning a drain in the bazaar. That is the *thapas*, that is the highest form of *saadhana*. More than listening to a hundred lectures or delivering them to others, offering one act of genuine *seva* attracts the Grace of God.

The body has to be utilised for service to others. Activity is its main purpose. Krishna says, "I have no need to be engaged in work but I do work in order to activate the world." More *aanandha* can be won by serving others than what can be got by merely serving oneself. Offer service to some one in need, with a full heart and experience the *aanandha* that results. It need not be something big; it can even be small and unnoticed by others. It has to be done to please the God within you and him.

Avoid the ego marring your saadhana

We require today those who take delight in selfless service, but such men are rarely seen. You who belong to the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, every one of you, must become a *sevak*, eager to help those who need it. When the *sevak* (helper) becomes the *nayak* (leader) the world will prosper. Only a *kinkara* (servant) can grow into a *Shankara* (Master). Of course, one has to eliminate the ego totally. Even a trace of it will bring disaster. However long you may do *dhyaana*, however constant your *japa*, a little ego will render them barren of results. *Bhajan* done with egoistic pride will be as harsh as the crow's caw. So, try to avoid the ego marring your *saadhana*, even to a small extent.

You all know the story of Vishwaamithra, who had as a result of severe *thapas* for years, earned the power even to create another Heaven amenable to his will. His ego made him intensely passionate and short tempered (*raajasik*). So, he was known as *Raaja-Yogi and Raajarishi*. He was jealous of the sage Vasishtha who was adored as a *Brahmarishi* and sought that title for

himself. This made him even more *raajasik*. The wilder his desire, the higher rose the ego flames.

Be vigilant against doubts and fears

The Sathya Sai Organisation has laid down *seva* as *saadhana*, in order to uproot from your mind this evil trait. Service helps you to remove the ego. So, do not pay heed to what others might say when you engage in service activities. When you are doing good acts, why hesitate, why feel ashamed, why fear? Let Compassion and Sacrifice be your two eyes; let Egolessness be your breath and Love be your tongue. Let Peace reverberate in your ears. These are the five vital elements you have to live upon. God will not ask you, when and where did you do service? He will ask, "With what motive did you do it? What was the intention that prompted you?" You may weigh the *seva* and boast of its quantity. But, God seeks quality, the quality of the heart, the purity of the mind, the holiness .of the motive.

You know you have been doing, as *seva dhaal* members, *seva* in many fields and directions, for ten or twelve years. You are not novices; you are aware of the *seva-way* of life. But since you are human, veils and fog, weeds and worms infest the mind. Doubts and fears haunt your work. But be vigilant against the onslaughts of these. Strive everyday, faithful to the ideal you have set before yourself, to improve your *seva* activities along pure, unselfish, sacred lines.

This day and tomorrow, people with years of experience will be telling you the means and methods by which your *seva* activities can become more beneficial to a larger number of deserving people. You will also have group discussions on these topics. Confer among yourselves in a meaningful way and arrive at some proposals for bettering your service programmes. Later, I shall resolve any doubts that arise and advise you not only for *seva* here and now, but also for attaining peace and joy for ever. I shall converse with you and reward you with *aanandha* through My Blessings.

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*The mind is like a lake.
When the water is calm,
the rays of the sun are
reflected on the surface of water,
like a mirror.*

*But if the water is disturbed
because the wind is blowing,
then there is very little reflection.
Man must learn to control his mind.*

Man is Divine,

*and if only he could
remember that,
he would see life so very differently;
he would cease to be affected by
so much of what goes on
in the world.*

Sathya Sai Baaba