

25. Equipment for service

INDULGING in flimsy gossip and watching scenes of violence and cruelty, men today are wasting and missing a big portion of their precious lives. Time is condemned, because it is too little, or because it runs too fast to fulfill galloping greed. Men are not aware that time sanctified by service offers high rewards to themselves as well as those whom they serve. All acts of service are not equally sanctifying or uniform in the benefits they confer. When service is undertaken by power-hungry people, or under compulsion or by imitative urges, it results in more harm than good. Self-aggrandizement or competition or ostentation are motives that will pollute the sacred *Sadhana* of Service. The candidate for this *Sadhana* has to avoid *Ahamkara* (egotism), *Adambara* (exhibitionism) and *Abhimana* (favouritism).

Before embarking on a service project one must introspect and examine his equipment for the *Sadhana* whether his heart is full of selfless love, humility and compassion, whether his head is full of intelligent understanding and knowledge of the problem and its solution, whether his hands are eager to offer the healing touch, whether he can gladly spare and share time, energy and skill to help others in dire need.

Seva must be freed from attachment

These qualities can sprout and grow only when the Reality of Unity is implanted in the consciousness. All men, all living beings, are cells in the Body of God. Their origin, continued existence, and progress are all in God, by God, for God. The individual is a unit in this unity. There are no other aliens. When one is ill, all suffer. When one is happy, all are partners of that happiness. Faith in this truth is the fundamental equipment the *Sevak* must acquire.

Leaders and guides of *Seva* organisations and institutions and activities are offering charity, claiming that they are motivated by generosity and accepting homage from recipients. This is the reason why such service all over the world does not yield lasting results.

In order to deserve the sacred name, *Seva*, the activity must be freed from all attachment to the Self and based on firm faith in the Divine resident in every being. *Seva* has to be considered as worshipping the form that God has assumed to give the *Sevak* the chance of worship. When a hungry *Nara* is served a hearty meal, what is being done is *Narayana Seva*, for, *Nara* (man) is only "a form and a name" projected by *Maya* (human ignorance) on *Narayana* (God).

This is a gathering of members of the *Seva Dal* who are engaged in service among the rural population in this country. You are here busy with what is called a workshop. Do not allow your service activities turn into shops which concentrate on window dressing, in order to attract attention and patronage. Service rendered to villagers, who are denied the ways and means of decent lives, draws Divine Grace, more than service elsewhere. Give a helping hand to the helpless, who are afflicted with many ailments and handicaps.

Action alone can inspire action

But, before attempting to advise them, you must endeavour to advise yourselves; before venturing to reform them, reform yourselves. Care must be taken to avoid boasting before them about your superiority. It will hurt them and keep them away. Do not indulge in lectures. Action alone can inspire action. Example alone can instruct. Tall talk is a barren exercise.

Service activities in all lands can thrive only through selfless dedication. Fanfare is a sign of insincerity. Silent, unsullied work alone can appeal. The villager has enough common sense to

see through the show. Remember that, though illiterate, he is aware of the ideals propounded by the scriptures, saints and sages of this land, of the core of Bharatiya Culture. Clever propaganda may achieve some temporary results but, in the long run, it will bring disappointment and disillusion. Like the 'rockets' lit by children on Deepavali night, it will flare up and fizzle down.

Today, we are confronted everywhere by statistics parading quantities and reports in glowing terms. Do not bother about adding to the number or achieving a target. I value quality, not quantity. Genuine, intensive devoted service offered in a few villages is more fruitful than casual contacts and superficial service offered to a large number.

Convince yourselves that life cannot continue long without others serving you and your serving others. Master-servant, ruler-ruled, guru-disciple, employer-employee, parents-children, all these are bound by mutual service. Every one is a *sevak*. The farmer and labourer whom you serve produce by their toil your food and clothing as their service to you. Remember that the body, with its senses-mind-brain complex has been awarded to you to be used for helping the *helpless--Paropakartham idam sareeram*. *Seva* is the highest of paths of Devotion which wins the Grace of God. It promotes mental purity, diminishes egoism and enables one to experience, through sympathetic understanding, the unity of mankind. Therefore, I bless your *Seva* activities in the villages of your motherland.

Discourse at Poornachandra Auditorium on 21-11-1986.