

## 18. Elephants and the Lion

THERE is no lack of individuals and institutions in India today devoted to the revival, so far as it lies in their power and along the lines dictated by their intuition, of the precious culture of this land. They toil in the fields of economic progress, moral uplift, or mental integration, social betterment, political advancement or spiritual enlightenment. The goals and ideals which prompt this activity are laudable and desirable. But all are afflicted by disappointment and exhaustion, soreness or sloth, because the means are either wrong or ineffective.

They have first to demarcate their horizons of action, and define their obligations within those fields. Obligations, not rights! Very often individuals (and even institutions) trespass into the realm of others, compete with fellow workers, and sometimes try to establish superiority, by means fair or foul. Power and position have to be deserved, before they are desired. Those who seek to serve others and promise to cure their ills must have the equipment to diagnose the illness and determine the drug.

Service is a difficult and discriminating process; mere amateur enthusiasm hampers rather than hastens progress. Learning the technique of service, cultivating the impulse to serve, these are steps in equipping a person for leadership.

### **Service fills the heart with genuine joy**

A club has its reputation built by its members; each member as a strand builds up the strength of the institution. If the member is discontented and subject to fits of grumbling, the club cannot be free from anxiety. The Lion's Club is an institution devoted to service. It has come to India from America; but it brings to this land no new message. Its call has echoed in millions of hearts for centuries in this land. The saints and sages of India, and even the Incarnations that God vouchsafed to take in this land, have proclaimed and themselves practised the ideal of service to fellow-beings. Krishna drove the chariot of Arjuna during the fateful days when the fortunes of the Paandavas were decided at the point of the sword. Imagine the Lord of the Universe holding the reins of Arjuna's horses! Note how Hanumaan was elated when he rose to the status of the servant of Raama!

Those of you who have had the privilege of serving your unfortunate brothers and sisters will stand witness to what I am saying now; there is no discipline equal to Service to smother the ego and to fill the heart with genuine joy. To condemn service as demeaning and inferior is to forgo these benefits. A wave of service, if it sweeps over the land, catching every one in its enthusiasm, will be able to wipe off the mounds of hatred, malice and greed that infest the world.

Attune your hems so that it will vibrate in sympathy with the woes and joys of your fellowmen. Fill the world with Love. Love will warn you against advising another to do something which you yourself are unwilling to do; your conscience will tell you that you are telling a lie! So, before you enroll yourself as a member of a Club dedicated to service, first examine your own mind, see that it is not tarnished by the cobwebs of doubt and the dust of passion. Do not join because some one else is already there, or that it will promote your business, or that it will be an addition to your prestige. Meetings should be convened with an urge to meet, arising out of genuine need, to exchange inspiration and instruction. Do not also be anxious to waste money on dinners; why feed the over-fed? Feed the hungry, the ones who have not had so far the delight that a full meal alone can give.

### **Intellect crowns you with kingship**

Your Club has a very significant name; you are rendering good service to the people. But, I know that you are not deriving from it the sense of satisfaction to the extent anticipated. The Lion is the King of Beasts, the Monarch of the Forest. Man too is a beast, like the jackal, the cheetah, the tiger and the lion. The elephant is the largest of the animals; its footprints are bigger than those of any other. When the elephant walks, it plants its feet so broad and heavy that the footprints of all other animals and denizens of the forest are effaced! And the lion and the elephant are mortal enemies.

There is a deep lesson that Nature teaches you through this: The Mind is the elephant that tramples through the jungle of life, restrained by no fear, regulated by no rule. But, the elephant is dreadfully afraid of the lion. The very sight of the lion fills the elephant with panic! For, the Lion symbolises *Buddhi* (the Intellect). Intellect crowns you with kingship. All have to bend before the throne of Intellect, which confers the highest Bliss. The mind is dumb before the dictates of the intellect; but, before the sense and their demands, it acts as instigator. Make the mind subserve the Intellect; then, the path of man towards God is straightened and smoothed. Lions, as you are, you must investigate the reasons for the defects that you seek to correct, diagnose the ills you attempt to cure and then, discuss the best course of treatment, before actually launching a campaign of service.

Members of certain institutions pay so little attention to the responsibilities that membership involves that they do not know even the aims and objectives. They are in only for the name's sake. This should not be; everyone must be fully aware of the duties, the limits and the lines of action and he must enter with open eyes. Each one must contribute his full share in the discharge of those duties. Your ideal is service; and, so, each person must wholeheartedly co-operate in acts of service.

### **Zeal and zest are efficient instruments for service**

I have noted the work of the Lions in East Africa and in many cities of India. In countries beyond seas, Lions are doing a good job, promoting education and preventing disease. The appalling poverty of our people makes these schemes of service rather too costly and difficult; but do not get discouraged; carry on bravely, to the fullest extent of your resources. Compassion can achieve ends which mere money cannot reach! Zeal and zest are more efficient instruments for service than gifts and donations. They give one man the energy of ten.

There are among you both lawyers and doctors. These can go into the slum areas, and meet the dwellers therein and administer medical and legal help. Or, they can go into some villages and help them with medical and legal advice. Villagers suffer much while trying to secure judicial relief, on account of wrong drafting of documents. They rely on touts and quacks and discover that they have received wrong advice, only when it is too late! Extend your activities to places and people who have no one now to guide them. Why spend your energies among sections which are already well served by Government agencies?

Progress is not to be measured by the increase in the number of members. It is to be judged by the quantity and the quality of work done. I must draw your attention to another point. There are many who attribute the unrest in the country to religion and who prescribe irreligion as the remedy! The fault lies not in religion, which always insists on self-control and purity of intentions, brotherhood and service, but in the human heart which is tainted by greed and lust.

The accusing finger is pointed at the multiplicity of religions in India, but even people who follow one religion fight frantically among themselves, even when the religion directs them to show the other cheek when a slap is delivered by a foe on one!

### **Love is the unfailing key to expansion**

The followers of one and the same religion may torture each other and slaughter innocent lives with bestial glee! So, religion is not responsible at all. The unrest is due to want of religion, rather than the plethora of religions. It is blind fanaticism that is to be condemned; not, religion that is against it. Love of country can also be tainted by fanaticism; it has led man to destroy by the atom bomb innocent millions living in another country, hoping thereby to secure the safety of the country one loves! The mind in which hatred and egotism grow can never appreciate religion. Is religion the cause of the calculated cruelty of the atom bomb? No.

The plan and purpose of the ancient religions of India are to plant the seeds of Love in the human heart so that they may sprout into saplings of endurance, and blossom into tolerance, yielding ultimately the fruits of Peace. The pinnacle of Indian thought in *Adhwaita*, the experience of the One, of the negation of duality. Some countries proceed towards the ideal of individual freedom; others aim at State sovereignty and the suppression of the individual right to freedom. But, Bharath has, from time immemorial, sought to infuse in the individual, the lesson that he can be free only when he realises his identity with all--not just the inhabitants of his own state or those who use his own language, or those of his own colour or creed, but all mankind and all beings, alive and inert. Expansion is the key to happiness, and Love is the unfailing key to expansion. Man is kin to all, that is the teaching of *Sanaathana Dharma* (eternal religion).

This idea of kinship is the great inspiration of *Seva*. Emphasise the fact of kinship; your programme of social service will get a move forward. Do not analyse and allot blame; sympathise and shower Love. Serve, in order to heal the agony in your heart; not because the constitution of the Club requires members to serve; not because it brings recognition in high places, or because it is the 'duty' of those who are better off!. Serve because you can have no peace unless you serve. It is an inner urge to experience the kinship.

### **Encourage sense control and self-restraint**

Those in charge of administration are not interested in elevating the means; they are keen only on the end, namely, the standard of living. Purity of the means ensures purity of the end. The people, too, are powerless to correct the attitude and motives of the rulers. So, groups of earnest people like you have to alert the rulers and awaken the ruled.

On the plea that the increase of population is harmful to the progress of the country, limiting births artificial means is adopted as a policy and practices are being propagated on a national scale. This is an absurdly wrong step. This is like chopping off the head, since the door is too low and you do not want to enter with a stoop! What you have to do is to discover means of growing more food, by, to give one example, utilising the vast sources of underground water. Artificial means of preventing conception will promote licentiousness and bring down on the country bestial promiscuity. Those who encourage these dangerous tactics must rather encourage sense control and self-restraint through *Yoga and Seva*, methods advocated in the scriptures by sages who knew the calamities that are the consequence of irresponsible fatherhood or frustrated motherhood. The innocent, ignorant victims of this campaign, broadening out with so much fanfare, can well be educated to master their lower urges and sublimate them into more

beneficial channels. Without mental preparation and determination these artificial methods may cause insanity and other complexes, ill-health and manias.

Through the media of films, books, music and the behaviour of elders, young minds are excited and aroused into indulgence! Through the campaign for Family Planning, they are persuaded to adopt means by which they have no responsibility for the consequences of that indulgence! This is, indeed, burning the future strength and progress of the nation at both ends! The best method for family planning is the ancient one: making man realise through Saadhana (spiritual discipline) his innate Divinity. I desire that the doctors among you ponder over the inevitable calamities that will follow the spread of artificial means of family planning, means of escaping the restraints imposed by society, scriptures and culture on the lower instincts of man. You must help to guide the nation along right lines. I bless you that you may succeed in this noble mission of serving the best interests of the nation.

*Lions Club, Raajamundry, 10-9-1969*