

10. Sappers and miners

The very first gathering in the Prashaanthi Nilayam heralding every Festival, is a meeting of members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dhal, from all parts of the country. When thousands come to this place, which to most of them is new and strange, full of unfamiliar experiences, it becomes the duty of young persons like you to serve them, in a spirit of dedication, so that they may feel they are lovingly looked after and treated as if they are brothers and sisters, come to their family home.

It is a sign of spiritual weakness to differentiate among them and select the poor or rich, the educated or the illiterate, the native or the foreigner. They are all aspirants and seekers, and so, they have to be welcomed and helped to participate and share in the joy which they have planned to experience here. Each of them is a repository of *Aanandha* (Bliss), and that is the reason why they have the urge to taste it in a larger measure. Each one has Sai installed in his heart and so, is a brother, a kinsman. So do not pollute your acts of service with the poison of pride. Be humble that you have the sacred chance to use these days of your life in this noble task.

There are nine stages of devotion, through which the seeker has to ascend, before he culminates in total surrender and mergence with his Divine ideal. Of these, the seventh stage is 'Service of the Feet of the Lord!' And you have the good fortune of being considered fit for that stage, now itself. The Lord's Feet are million; the feet that are rushing into this campus are those of the Lord. Serve them, so that you can move on into the two further stages and realise your goal.

Be looking all around for any chance of service

You are getting the great chance of partaking in a huge *sathsang* (holy company), from today! Thousands are coming to this place, prompted by keen desire to see, hear and contact Divinity, and for those who have kindred desires, the chance to move about in this Sea of Spirit is indeed a sign of Grace. This is the benefit of fairs and festivals held in holy places; the wave of exhilaration, enthusiasm and exultation lifts men aloft into the rarefied air of Holy Beatitude.

Two attainments mark out the *Sevak*, especially the Sathya Sai Sevak---absence of conceit and presence of love. Service to those needing help makes you the comrade of all, irrespective of other considerations. Be looking all around you, all the time, even beyond the horizon of your allotted tasks, for any extra chance to serve. An old man may be stranded in the hot sun, a paralytic may be casting his eyes for a chair, a child may be wailing for its parent, a mother may be clamouring for water to slake her thirst, another may be heart-broken for she has not got a vantage point from where she could see what is happening on the dais---watch for these, and run towards them, with a smile and a word of cheer!

It may be that some one has swooned or fainted. Get the doctor or take the patient to the dispensary, with loving care, and with gentle alacrity, instilling courage and confidence. Let them go back to their places and say that not even their nearest kinsmen could have dealt with that situation as lovingly and as intelligently as you did. Have compassion, love, readiness to sacrifice personal comforts, and patience---then, you can be a successful *Seva dhal* member.

Examples are the best instructors

This means that you must be engaged in constant *Naamasmarana* (remembering God's Name) yourself, so that you remain a true servant of God while claiming to serve man, or rather, so that you may see in Man the God that is his real nature. If you have not acquired that vision, you will

not find unity among these diverse representations of the Divine. You will get confused by the multiplicity.

Hold on to the Command; that is the genuine path of the *bhaktha* (devotee). Never doubt or hesitate. Even if you are posted to the canteen or the hospital, do not get downhearted, that you cannot get *dharshan*, all time. I have no such handicaps; you can have My *dharshan*, wherever you are. When you are engaged in *dhyaan* (meditation), if you hear some groan by your side, rise and investigate; do not curse and neglect. You get much more spiritual benefit by this means, than by sticking on selfishly to your patch of carpet or deerskin!

Have a tender and a sweet voice. Do not shout yourselves, while reprimanding others for speaking aloud. Be examples for others, not simply castigators! Examples are the best instructors. Be deaf to the harsh words that others may in their ignorance use against you. They too will soften, if you explain to them the why and wherefore of the restrictions and regulations that are prescribed here, by Me. When you speak soft and sweet to a person who is angry with you, you will feel a surge of joy within you. And the repentance you evoke in him is the reward you get.

Be saturated with equal love to all

One more point. You should wear simple dress, and not swagger about in new fangled outlandish bush-shirts and drain-pipe pants. How can a simple villager ask for help from some one who does not appear to belong to his world? Your face, appearance, stance and apparel must infuse confidence exuding sympathy and humility, so that the distressed and disconsolate, the old and the decrepit might come to you gladly for assistance to solve their problems. This applies also to lady members of the *Seva Dhal* (Volunteer Service). They too can keep people away, by means of frightful hair-do's and repelling apparel.

Above all, remember that you are members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dhal, 'sappers and miners' of the Sathya Sai Era. You have to be saturated with equal and universal love to all. You must be steady in adversity and in fortune. You must be skilled in the knowledge necessary for serving others, in an emergency. My name is Baba, B.A., B.A. I am a 'double graduate,' as you can see! What do those letters mean? B means *Sath* (Being); A means *Chith* (Awareness); the second B means *Aanandha* (Bliss); and the second A means *Aathman*. The entire word means that I am *Sath-Chith-Aanandha Aathman!* And, you too are *Sath, Chith* and *Aanandha Aathman*. Only, you are not aware of it, you have not discovered it and revealed it. Service in the spirit I have indicated is one of the ways through which you can make that discovery.

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A volcano throws up its lava on the screen of the picture house; a dam bursts and the flood waters it had impounded roar along towards the sea, submerging vast states; but the screen is not burnt, nor does it get wet in the least.

The screen is the truth; the film is an illusion, however realistic it was, however genuine the feelings it aroused.

Know this and so direct your life that this knowledge is the background of all your action,. Thus, you will have great peace and great joy.

Sri Sathya Sai