

## 18. No bumps, no jumps

IT seems a person once saw a man struggling for life in the deep waters of a lake. The fellow could not swim and was really helplessly floundering. But without the least compunction of sympathy and without making the least effort to save him, the onlooker had the audacity to ask him, "Tell me, how deep is the lake?" Such is the behaviour of most people now-a-days. These persons are sunk In thamas---they are too wooden and dull, too hard and impervious. It is only when man gets rid of thamas {sloth and inaction) that he can rise Into rajas---the sphere of activity, emotion, devotion, compassion and service. When he rises higher into the saathwik stage (poised state of contemplation), the activity gets elevated into *saadhana* (spiritual discipline) and the effect is more spiritual.

I find here thousands of young men and women, members of the Seva Dhal, gathered from all the states of India. This is the third All India Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dhal. It is time that we decide to assess what has been the achievement so far, whether the basic purpose for which the Dhal was planned is being realised. We have had reports from various State Conveners of Seva Dhal of many types of work that is being carried out by the units of the Dhal. Let Me tell you that mere execution of some duties enjoined on the Dhal by the rules cannot be recognised as *bhakthi* (devotion or dedication). Duty done without love is deplorable; duty done with love is desirable. But acts of love that emanate from a person because it is his nature and not because it is enjoined on him as a duty he has to fulfill, is really Divine.

### **"Your seva brings you nearer to Me"**

Let Me impress on you another point. Every convener repeated the report of every other; there was more imitation than originality in ideas and programmes. Doing something because it is being done elsewhere is a sign of ignorance. The programmes must satisfy a local need, solve a local difficulty. They must arise out of felt needs and should be adapted to local conditions. It must be taken into consideration whether the place concerned is urban or rural, industrial or agricultural, a pilgrim centre or civic extension, a developing area or a sinking economy, a tribal settlement or a hill station.

The person who borrows some idea from another region and executes it might feel satisfied that he has achieved some concrete programme. But do the people whom he tried to benefit feel better and happier? That is the test. Do not think of the fame or praise you win; think of the good that people derive. Do not crave for publicity; crave for the joy that shines In the faces of the people whom you help. *Seva* (selfless service) brings you nearer to Me. The flower that is your heart gets fragrance by means of the *seva* you do, and so it becomes more acceptable to Me. Love is the essence of that fragrance.

### **In seva there can be no high or low**

Through *seva* you realise that all beings are waves of the Ocean of Divinity. No other *saadhana* can bring you into the incessant contemplation of the One-ness of all living beings. You feel another's pain as your own; you share another's success as your own. To see every one else as yourself and yourself in every one, that is the core of the *saadhana* of *seva*. Again, *seva* makes the ego languish for want of food. It makes you humble before the suffering of others, and when you rush to render help, you do not calculate how high or low his social or economic status is. The hardest heart is slowly softened into the softness of butter by the opportunities that the Seva Dhal offers.

*Seva* is prescribed as one among the nine steps towards Realisation. You must therefore be earnest about it and welcome all chances to serve the old, the sick, the disabled, the diseased and the distressed. Holding a fruit in the hand is just a preliminary step; eating and digesting must follow, so that you may be healthy and happy. So, too, wearing a scarf and badge round the neck is but an indication of the joy that is within reach when you actually serve. Your *Seva* will be Judged with reference to the mental attitude accompanying it. So, whatever work is allotted, do it with fervour, understanding and reverence. In *seva* there can be no high or low, for Sai is in all. Sai receives your *seva*, to whomsoever you may offer it. Do not be sad that you have been posted on some duty that keeps you far from Me. Know that I am nearest to him who calls on Me and sees Me in all beings.

### **Love is the solvent for the hardest of hearts**

The world today is torn into factions and groups that hate and hack each other. No method is considered too cruel if the aim is to destroy one's enemy. No one is aware of the innate Unity, the ever-present current of Divinity that animates every single living being on earth. You have the role now of demonstrating that all is not lost, that there are still people who believe in Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love, that acts of loving service rendered in a spirit of humility and reverence are still making people happy, and that the day when the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God will shine bright and beautiful is drawing and dawning near.

All efforts are now being concentrated on the production of more food, the building of more houses and the manufacture of more cloth. But what is most needed today is a total effort to make man manifest more tolerance, more humility, more brotherliness, more compassion and deeper awareness of the springs of joy and peace that lie within the heart of each one. This country, Bharath, must be in the fore-front of this spiritual adventure.

Love is the solvent for the hardest of hearts. Without love, free, full and selfless, no spiritual *saadhana* can succeed. Without it, *bhajan* (group singing of devotional songs on Lord's Names and Glory) is waste of breath, *sathsang* (holy company) a waste of time and meditation a self-deception. *Bhajan*, *sathsang* and meditation done with a mind soaked in love, can confer peace, joy and wisdom. When the rain drop falls into the sea, it gets the name, form and nature of the sea. So, too, when the individual merges in the vast concourse of humanity and feels one with all, he is endowed with the name, form and nature of Divinity. Whatever you do as service, to whomsoever you offer the act, believe that it reaches the God in that person: *Ishwarassarva bhoothaanaam*. So it is *Ishwaraar-panam* (dedicated to God).

### **Destiny of nations hangs on the youth**

You have joined the *Seva Dhal* at the most important period of your lives, for youth is a stage of life when self-control, self-examination and self-effort are most needed and least exercised. What a mighty potential for progress is wasted by the empty vagaries of the youth today. If only the courage, the optimism, the strength and the imagination of youth is channelised into constructive channels, how soon the human community can attain peace and prosperity.

The youth are drawn easily into wild adventures, acts of bravado and exhibition of group fanaticism. They are given to sudden changes of passion or emotion. All over the world they are being swayed on the waves of anger and adventure. The destiny of nations hangs on the direction the youth will take in these turbulent times. They should not be led into the paths of hypocrisy,

deceit or greed. They must act the way they speak and speak the way they think. They should think good thoughts, speak good words and do good deeds. That will give inner Joy and contentment. That will make them worthy sons and daughters of this ancient land.

### **Be eager and alert to render service**

Within the next few days you, members of the Seva Dhal and of the Volunteer Force gathered here from all the states of India and even from beyond the seas, have a number of service assignments facing you. You have to shoulder heavy responsibilities and execute various duties in the spirit of *saadhana*, which enjoins you to revere duty as God and to engage in work not as dreary drudgery, but as worship of the Lord Himself. You have dedicated yourselves to *seva*, which has to be saturated in selfless love.

The service that you render must reward you, not only with your satisfaction, but with the satisfaction and relief of those whom you serve. When those whom you serve are not relieved or made happy thereby, of what avail is your elation or exultation at the help you have been allowed to offer? You should have the joy of the recipient as your objective. Do not sit back and talk of your having done what is expected of you, but try to discover whether your act of service has really been worth-while, whether it has been intelligently rendered with full appreciation of the peculiar circumstances of the individual who needed it. Do not feel that this is an obligation imposed on you by the rules of the Organisation or by the person nominated as your leader. Do not feel that the scarf and badge that you wear are impediments to freedom. They are reminders of the high mission to which you have been initiated, the keys to your Realisation of reality through the *saadhana* of *seva*. Even when you do not wear the scarf or parade the badge, you must be eager and alert to render *seva* to fellow-beings who need it.

### **Soft speech adds sweetness to living**

Man is endowed with the equipment of senses, reason, feelings, passions and detachment, so that he may keep away from the enticement of pleasures and spend his life in helping, serving, sustaining and saving his fellow men. He has to live in *seva*, not *bhoga* (enjoyment). The badge on the chest helps to keep off the ego thumping inside, to broaden the heart and to focus all attention on the Lord resident therein. It is like the wheeled stand which helps the child to walk. It has to be revered until you transcend it and feel that all mankind is your kin. The badge should not be impurified by your indulging in deleterious habits such as impulsive anger, selfishness, flippant conversation, smoking, drinking, gambling or loitering in un-sanctified places.

Do not wag or argue just for the sake of argument. Let your words be few, fair and felicitous. Soft speech adds sweetness to living. Even when you are engaged in discussion amongst yourselves, be short of speech and polite in behaviour. Some amongst you have been selected as leaders and guides; carry out their Instructions without demur or diminution. If you feel any doubt, regarding the propriety or advisability of those Instructions, talk them over with the leaders alone, in a spirit of friendliness. But do not disregard to modify those Instructions at any cost. The leader has to pay attention to the overall situation which may not be so clear to you. People from more than 45 countries from all parts of the globe are coming for the World Conference. So any failing or fault in your faith or in the fulfilment of the duties assigned to you, will reflect on this great nation.

### **Service is the best school for training in leadership**

Bhaarath is the land where the triple *saadhana* of Discipline, Devotion and Duty was first laid down, and where it has had the largest number of votaries through the ages. So you have to demonstrate to the visitors that the lesson is still very much honoured and observed in this land. Not only this, you have to maintain the fair name of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. On the one hand you have the call of the motherland and on the other, the command of Sai, who is no less than the Mother Herself.

Ganesha is reputed to have two Mothers---Gowri and Ganga. Gowri is one daughter of the Himaalayas, who is merged in the left half of the body of Shiva. Ganga is another daughter of the Himaalayas who has her place in the matted hair which forms the crown of Shiva. You, too, have two Mothers--- *Bhaarath Maatha* and *Sai Maatha*. You must emulate Ganesha not in the quantity of food eaten, but in His aspect as *Vinaayaka*, for to become a *Vinaayaka*, a special type of leader, you have to be for long an earnest and enthusiastic servant engaged in selfless, loving service. Service is the best school for training in leadership. You should eliminate in that school all traces of disgust, anger and impatience. Pride and personal prejudices will try to put spokes in the wheel as you go to serve the distressed and the diseased. But you should never give up faith in the right path you have chosen. Remind yourself that you are a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) and that *seva* is the spiritual path that you have ventured upon as the easiest and the best.

When you mix with volunteers and others who have no deep faith or sweet experience of the value of *seva*, you may get caught up in conversation that might shake your conviction. Do not allow their superficial Judgement to undermine your steadfastness. Keep away from such persons; let them test their doubts on the touchstone of their own experiences of *seva*. Take their disbelief indifferently, and allow them time to realise and overcome their doubts by their own will.

### **Be inspired as humans, not fitful as beasts**

Discipline entails the strict observance of rules and regulations and directions. The sense of duty can yield results only when discipline is observed, and devotion to Sai and the Message of Sai is the basis for the sense of duty which keeps you ever bound to discipline. Do not be part-time devotees, leading one kind of life when you wear the scarf and badge and another kind of life when you have removed them. Be ever *saadhakas* and *sevakas* (servitors). Do not forget, do not modify. In the path of service that you have chosen, there should be no bumps of doubt or Jumps of deviation. Move on steadily and bravely, with your eyes fixed on the Goal, the Grace of the Lord. Be Intent on the development of the man-mind. Not the monkey-mind. Do not hop about from decision to Indecision, from acceptance to denial. Be alert and inspired as humans, not dull and fitful as beasts. Above all, cultivate love, express love, move among other Seva Dhal members with love. Let love be your very breath. Let the sum of love help the lotus of your heart to blossom. May you be victorious in all your undertakings of service. That is My blessing for each one of you.

*Poornachandra Auditorium, 14-11-1975*

*Bhaktha (devotee) is like the needle which is always drawn towards the magnet. But the needle has to be near enough; it has also to be clean enough. You stay far away and complain*

*that Grace has not come. You do not scrape off, by the process of repentance, the mud and rust that prevent attachment.*

*You come near for some time and stray away into the distance. I don't mean physical distance at all. You may be physically far, but mentally by My side. I do not measure distance in miles or metres; I am with you, in you, beside you, ever; only you have to be aware of Me and make use of My Presence.*

*Sri Sathya Sai*