

26. Born to Serve

*Rendering Service selflessly
with a compassionate heart
Is alone true Service.
One is bound to attain peace
If he serves in a friendly spirit
This is the truth
This is the truth.*

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine Atma! You have to recognise that life is meant for selfless service and not to be lived for selfish purposes. Only through such service can the oneness of mankind be experienced. Unselfish service is the sheet-anchor of *Karma Yoga* (Divine dedication through Action). The basis of *Yoga* is disciplining the mind and the body through disinterested service.

Society honours only such persons who serve society. Such persons earn the grace of God. Every individual has to realise the paramount importance of selfless service. The spirit of service should be coupled with readiness for sacrifice. Only then it can be called selfless service free from any taint of self-interest. Such service lends savour to life.

Universal love sustains life by its nourishment. Love is the life-breath of man. Magnanimity of spirit lends fragrance to life.

However eminent a person may be, he has to realise that the main purpose of life is to render dedicated service to one's fellow men. The relationship between mother and child, preceptor and disciple, God and devotee, is based on mutual dependence. There cannot be a child without a mother, a disciple without a teacher, a devotee without God. Each is associated with the other in an inextricable bond.

Service should be rendered to the helpless

One should be prepared to serve others than choose to be served by them. Moreover, there is nothing meritorious in serving those who are high above us. For one thing, they can command the services of attendants. Rendering service to those who are in the same position as ourselves is not also commendable. Service should be rendered to those who are worse off than ourselves and who are neglected by the world.

There are three levels of people in the world. At the highest level are those who may be placed in the category of Lakshmi-Narayana. Those who are in the same stage as ourselves are in the category of Aswatha-Narayana. Those who are poorer than ourselves may be described as Daridra-Narayana. There is no need to render service to one who is Lakshmi-Narayana, as there will be servants to take care of him. Aswatha-Narayana is the type of person who is filled with endless desires and is never contented, whatever his accomplishments or earnings. Service to such a person is unnecessary. It is the weak, the destitute and the helpless who need to be served. Even in rendering service to such persons, there should be no feeling that we are serving 'others'. We should feel that we are serving the Lord Narayana who dwells in them.

When service is rendered in a total spirit of dedication, with concentration of thought, word and deed, the heart gets sanctified. Without purity of the heart there can be no spiritual progress.

Active Workers should not be arrogant

"Active workers" [in the Sai movement) should have no feeling of arrogance or ostentation in carrying on their activities. They must be broad-minded, completely free from selfish concerns, and must develop love towards all. Active workers are the spinal cord of the Sai organisation. They should understand what are human qualities and practise them in their life. Without having the right attitude, service done demonstratively in a spirit of self-conceit is a travesty of service. They should rid themselves of the sense of "mine" and "thine."

Pre-occupation with one's own welfare and happiness is the bane of the dualistic mentality. It breeds discontent and sorrow. Feelings of attachment and aversion sully the mind and through service can such a mind be purified. External observances like bathing several times a day and smearing *Vibhuti* all over and mouthing *mantras* mechanically will not serve to cleanse the mind of impurities. These are only outward show, with nothing spiritual about them.

Transcendental knowledge that can be got through diligent enquiry and steadfast faith which will help to raise man from the animal level is being ignored today. No effort is made to acquire this knowledge. Perceiving untruth as truth and treating truth as untruth men are immersed in accumulating ephemeral objects, considering them as permanent. Men must get out of this narrow groove. They must outgrow their selfish tendencies and learn to regard the whole of mankind as one family. That is true service. Few have such a large-hearted approach today.

Do not go after name or fame

The first requisite, therefore, is to get rid of all the bad thoughts, the selfishness, pride and other undesirable qualities from the heart so that the spirit of love can find its rightful place in it. Only a heart filled with love is pure and holy. Hence you should take up service activities in a loving spirit. You should not be concerned about name or fame. Fame is not a commercial product or a commodity that can be got from someone. It flows spontaneously like a river, which starts in a small way, but gathers volume as it goes along. Do not go after name or distinction. Concentrate your mind upon achieving your objectives. Fill your heart with love and engage yourselves in service. The man who cannot do service to others is not a man at all.

Render service according to your capacity

We must consider that we have taken birth only to render service to society as a sacred duty. Whatever small service we may do, if we do it in the right spirit, serving with no thought of self, we shall be doing something commendable and worthwhile. An act of service by itself may be a small thing. But it must be done wholeheartedly. Just as a cow transforms whatever it may consume into sweet, wholesome milk, any kind of service rendered with a pure heart will result in great good. You should not have any returns in view in rendering service. "This is my duty. I am born to serve"--it is with such an attitude that you should take up service.

All beings in creation are living by rendering mutual service and no one can be considered superior to another. Every person should render service according to his capacity and the sphere of his activities. There are various limbs in the human body. But the hands cannot do what the legs are capable of, nor can the eyes perform the duties of the ears. What the ears can enjoy, the eyes cannot. Likewise, among human beings there are differences. Their capacities and aptitudes

may vary. But each should take part in service activity according to his ability, equipment and field of work.

Any individual may offer worship and engage in spiritual activities according to his preferences. But, in my view, the merit to be gained through service is greater than what can be got through these religious observances.

Na thapaamsi Na theerthaanaam

Na saasthraanaam Najapaanapi

Samsara Saagarothhaaram

Sajjanasevanam Vinaa.

("Neither by penances nor baths in sacred waters, the study of scriptures nor through meditation can the ocean of *samsara* be crossed without rendering service to the good.")

Develop a large-hearted approach

Whatever pilgrimages we may undertake, our hearts hanker only after worldly objects and hence no cleansing of the heart occurs. The individual's quest for *Mukti* (liberation) is self centered. This is not right. One should strive to help others also to achieve liberation. That is true service. Few have such large -hearted approach today.

How can those who have been immersed ceaselessly in selfish pursuits earn the grace of god? Therefore, to begin with, there must be realisation of the divinity that is inherent in all human beings and which pervades the entire Cosmos. The unity that subsumes the diversity has to be understood to grasp the nature of divinity. So long as there is no understanding of divinity, there can be no understanding of even human nature.

Eliminate selfishness, which is the cause of dualism and its brood of opposites, joy and sorrow, likes and dislikes, etc. The egoist cannot understand his own true nature, much less that of others. Hence, the first step is understanding one's own self. Everyone refers to "I" but where is it located? And wherefrom does it arise? The ancient scriptures described the seat of *Ahamkaram* (ego) as *Hridayam* (the heart). This may suggest that the "I" is somewhere in the body. But this is not correct. *Hridayam* is all-pervasive. It is otherwise known as *Atma*.

Some consider that the *Atma* dwells in the heart. This is also wrong. *Hridayam and Atma* are one and to view them as different entities is wrong. If this is the case, it may be asked' Why are people plunged in the darkness of ignorance ? It is because their vision does not extend beyond the *Atma*. It does not go beyond the mind. One who is unable to go beyond the mind cannot escape from the shroud of ignorance. The way out of this condition is to realize that like the moon and the sun, the mind derives its light from the *Atma* and when the vision is turned towards the *Atma* the mind fades away or ceases to shine.

Few render service with love

It is necessary to realise that the *Atma* is all-pervasive and cultivate a feeling of love for all. The *Viswam* (Cosmos) is a projection of the *Vishnuswarupam* (the Divine). There is no need to search in any particular place for the Divine who is omnipresent. Formal religious observances or spiritual scholarship will not lead to God-realisation. It is not intellectual eminence that is required for the spiritual *sadhana*. It is better to have a single person with a good and kind heart than a hundred vainglorious intellectuals. We should train ourselves to become good men, who

are fit to undertake worthy tasks. If your minds are filled with hatred, envy and likes and dislikes, you are not qualified to embark on service activities.

"Offer services and receive love." This is the recipe for experiencing Divinity. But today service is not offered wholeheartedly. Few render service with love and hence few receive God's grace. Even their love is self-centered and is not all-embracing. Our love should not be confined to our kith and kin. It must extend beyond the family to society as a whole, then to the nation at large, and finally embrace the whole world.

Service in the right spirit is *Dharma*

This is the implication of Buddha's call: "*Sangham Saranam gachchaami.*" Starting from the *Buddhi* (the intellect) one should go beyond it to *Sangham* (society). This way, the oneness of the society is realised. But mere recognition of membership of society is not enough. One has to recognise and discharge through service one's obligation to society. That is the implication of the prayer: "*Dharmam Saranam Gachchaami.*" Doing service in the right spirit is *Dharma*.

Service is also path to God-realisation. God is embodiment of Love, Truth and Peace. Therefore, to realise God, one has to develop Love, adhere to Truth and experience Peace within oneself. The human body is like a chariot and the *Atma* is the charioteer. The bodies may have different forms and names. But the *Atma* is one and the same. It is essential to recognise the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. For instance, hunger is common to all, though the kind of food through which it is appeased may vary from an emperor to a beggar. Likewise, joy and grief, birth and death are common to all. The *Atma* is common to everyone. Recognising this oneness, they should engage themselves in service to all. Unfortunately, there is no feeling of unity today in the world. All the problems bedeviling mankind are due to the absence of unity.

Exemplify the quality of *Samathva* in service

The foremost duty of the Sai organisations is to promote unity on the basis that all are sparks of the divine and constitute one family. Without realising this basic truth, there is no use in rendering any kind of service. There can be no sacredness in service, if good thoughts and good feelings are absent. Service as an act of *Dharma* (righteousness) can be offered only by one who is pure in heart, selfless and equal-minded towards everyone (*Samathva*).

Great devotees in the past exemplified this quality of "*Samathva*" (equal concern for everyone). There is the example of Saint Tukaram. He maintained his household by cultivating a small piece of land. He was, however, indifferent to his own needs and spent all his time in contemplation of God. One year he grew sugar cane on his land. When the crop was ready for harvesting, passersby came to him and asked for a stalk of cane. Generous and self-sacrificing by nature, Tukaram allowed them to help themselves to as much cane as they liked. At this rate, only a fourth of the crop was left. Tukaram cut it and was bringing it in his cart. On the way many children asked for cane and Tukaram gave it freely.

By the time he reached home, only a single piece of cane was left. Seeing the empty cart, his wife flew into a rage and berated him. "Don't you have any thought for your wife and children? What do you mean by recklessly giving away all the cane?" Tukaram kept smiling as his wife was showering him with questions. Ultimately he told her: "Here is one piece of cane I have brought for you." Unable to restrain her anger, she seized the piece of cane from Tukaram and hit his legs with it. The cane broke into two leaving one half in her hand. Tukaram laughed heartily and said, "I was wondering on the way home how to divide the cane between you and the

children. I now have the answer. The cane left in your hand is your share. The children can share the other half." He felt happy at the way his wife had distributed the cane equally to all. This is the way devotees express their sense of equality to all.

No place for envy in Sai Organisation

Sai Sevaks should cultivate a similar spirit of tolerance and serenity to be able to render social service effectively. It is unbecoming of Sai Organisations for anyone in them to bear ill-will towards others. All should behave as children of one mother. Consider that everyone is an embodiment of the Divine Atma. Only then you can render service with zeal and vigour. Whatever may be one's wealth or position, in the sphere of service he should regard himself as equal with everyone else. All should bear in mind that wealth and position are not permanent. What is it that can be achieved through these? You can get what is destined for you and lose what you are fated to lose. Neither of these can be prevented by any subterfuges. Only the grace of the Divine will remain forever.

Today we are having a conference of "active workers." There are many who claim to be rendering social service. But selfish motives are present even in the field of service. Such selfishness should not have any place in Sai Organisations. The individual and the society are one. Whatever one does for society is also good for him. When service is done in that spirit, the individual as well as the society derive benefits from it. It may not be easy to cultivate such a sense of identity. But through persistent effort one can get over the sense of "mine" and "thine" and identify oneself with society at large. Once the will is there, anything can be accomplished. The power of a person's *sankalpa* (resolution) will outlast him.

Treat all service as offering to God

All service should be regarded as an offering to God and every opportunity to serve should be welcomed as a gift from God. When service is done in this spirit, it will lead in due course to self-realisation.

It is this kind of selfless, spiritually oriented service that is needed today. To a world riddled with conflict and chaos, this will provide a climate of serene peace. Regard yourselves as brothers in a family. But do not stop there. Go beyond kinship to the *Atmic* unity. You have to march from the *Annamaya* (the physical) to *Vijnanamaya* (the Higher Wisdom) and on to the state of *Anandamaya* (Divine Bliss). Shed completely all selfishness and self-interest and enter upon service activities as the highest purpose of life. Service must become your life-breath. You must become ideal *sevaks* and set an example to the world.

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Always have the meaning and the purpose of life in you. And, experience that purpose and that meaning. You are That, that is the truth. You and the universe are one; you and the absolute are

one; you and the Eternal are one. You are not the individual, the particular, the temporary. Feel this. Know this. Act in conformity with this.

--BABA