

8. Service To Man Is Service To The Lord

One cannot cross the ocean of this cycle of births and deaths by visiting many sacred places, nor by performing japa and studying the Sastras. It is only possible to do so by performing seva or service.

Sacred students!

To follow a spiritual path is the desire of all but strangely, the people as well as the rulers are adopting meaningless new methods. This is causing great surprise and ridicule. Unable to understand Indian culture in its true perspective, people are merely wearing good clothes which give an attractive appearance, using words which are deceptive, and are losing confidence in themselves. Our current civilisation is such that we

have started borrowing ideas and ideals from outside. They are disturbing our minds. Modern civilisation has taken a turn by which it gives twisted and incorrect interpretation of Indian culture. Individuals are very anxious to acquire positions of authority. They are not considering the need for fulfilling any of their responsibilities. In the case of one who understands his duty and responsibility, it follows automatically that he will, in due course, get a position and authority. But one who does not understand his duty, will never be able to acquire a position.

In order to evolve oneself into a balanced individual, service is an essential quality. This ideal of service has the good quality of removing ego in man. It promotes love and affection. It takes him away from the aspect of worldly attachments and puts him on the path to the Divine. This idea of service also explains to him the meaning of divinity. It can give widespread pleasure and bliss for the entire mankind. In fact, service is the first step along the spiritual path.

Today, because this sacred service is not practised in the proper manner, people in this country are becoming dependent on others. In the case of one who is willing to serve, the country comes under his control. In the case of one who is not willing to serve but is wanting to lead, the country never comes under his control. If one who understands the spirit of service becomes a leader, that leader will always retain and enjoy

his leadership through service. Without understanding service and first becoming a servant, one cannot become a leader. Similarly without being able to destroy, one cannot become a creator.

Man is born in the society. He lives in the society. He grows affluent by serving the society. Under these circumstances, if man becomes distant from society, he will be distant from everything. The child will cry for mother's milk and therefore the child will have to serve, respect and follow the mother. He has to worship the mother. He can flourish and thrive in that way. Just as in this manner, for each and every individual there is the mother and the mother is important, we should regard the country as the mother of all citizens. This is the divine mother and we should serve this divine mother.

Through service, we should be able to fulfil the purpose of our life. In this sacred country of ours, the idea of service has been handed over to us by the *Rishis* and the *gurus*. They had enjoined on us that we should fulfil our lives by service. In all the *Gurukulas* morals and ethics were taught. Teaching good things and preaching great ideals were their daily routine. Man was taught how to cherish sacred ideals and lead a good life. In the *Gurukulas*, morals and moral life were only taught, but in the *Rishikulas*, such ideals which promoted the prosperity of the world were put into practice and demonstrated. However, today neither such *Gurukulas*, nor such *Rishikulas* exist. In the word *Gurukula*, the

first part is “*Gu*.” In the word *Rishikula* the first part is “*Ri*.” The two parts together make up the word *Guru* or teacher. The concept of a real *Guru* has been handed over by both these *ashrams*.

The word *Rishi* conveys to us the meaning that those persons were leading a life in which they had no desires. They had attachment only to the *Atma* and in that manner, were promoting a spirit of sacrifice and of equality. They were leading lives which were ideal examples to others. For this reason, the *ashrams* were called *Rishikulas*. Such sacred places have now disappeared. With that, the letters “*Ri*” have also disappeared. Only the letters “*shikul*” remain.

This *shikul* has become the school of the modern days. Because today’s schools have developed attachments to many selfish desires, the letters “*Ri*” are not there. By some means, we should restore these sacred letters before the word school. You should regard this as your duty and get back the noble ideas into our schools.

When we think of service, we seem to think of work which is a lowly kind of work, usually done by a servant. This kind of association of ideas, where service is thought of as something lowly, is not correct. In the context of service, we should realise that God Himself does a lot of service to the world in many ways. We are familiar with the concept of an *Avatar*—when God takes birth in human form to re-establish *dharma* or put back

righteousness in its high place—thus doing service to the world. The omnipresent Lord, in the form of Krishna, served Arjuna as a charioteer. Not only this, but after His work as charioteer was over for the day, He used to take the tired horses to the river and wash them. In that manner he was prepared to work even as a cleaner. At that time, Vyasa looked at the Lord and felt that many great persons did not get the fortune which the horses had at the divine hands.

When the *Rajasuya yaga* was being performed, Krishna came and asked Dharmaraja to allot some work to Him. Dharmaraja turned to Krishna and said that there was no work appropriate to Krishna and that if Krishna would himself indicate what work was suitable to Him, that will surely be allotted to Him. Krishna went close to Dharmaraja, patted him on the back and said that he has a special qualification and that he would like to do work appropriate to His qualification. Dharmaraja could not make anything out of this. So Dharmaraja asked Krishna to tell him what His special qualification was so that he can find suitable work for Krishna.

He said that he was fit for removing the leaves in which people ate their food and which have been once used. Because after people eat their food in the leaves, they become somewhat unclean, and if those leaves are not removed they create some dislike in the minds of people. Krishna therefore took up this work so that He could give pleasure and good feeling to people.

If some kind of hurt or harm is caused to others, we should make an attempt to help them by doing some service. It is not only by work and by keeping our surroundings clean that you can do service. You can do service by your words as well. With a good word, you can soothe their hearts, and by doing good deeds you can soothe their minds. Therefore, by using good words and doing good work, you will give comfort to others and this is good service.

Today, people who call themselves leaders are not doing good service and as a consequence, the world around us is becoming very confusing. In this context, a story relating to the Krishna *Avathara* has to be mentioned. One day Krishna approached Yasoda and told her that all his cowherd friends were inviting him to go with them and tend the cows and that he was planning to go. The mother explained to him that to go to the forest will mean that he will have to walk on thorns, that he may have to meet snakes and that he may get close to bushes. She said that his tender feet may not be able to put up with the troubles and she said that it is better if he puts on footwear before going to the forest. She said that shoes for him will be ready only the next day and he could go to the forest only the next day.

Immediately, Krishna asked the mother to tell him how she addressed him. She said that his name was Gopal and that she addressed him by his name. The word Gopal stands for one who tends the cows. He said that

he acquired that name because he could tend the cows and be the leader of the cows. Since the cows will follow him as their leader, he said that he will have to do something which the cows also will do. The cows do not have shoes to protect their feet and therefore he said that he also should not have shoes to protect his feet. He said that he will do only that which persons who follow him can possibly do. He said that if he wore shoes, the cows will also want to wear shoes because their leader was wearing shoes. He was not going to wear shoes and allow those whom he has to protect to go without shoes. This is how he argued with his mother.

This simply means that when God takes a human form, men will try and imbibe his qualities and will behave like him. In those days when God appeared as an *Avatar* in the form of Krishna, the gopis, the gopikas and the cows followed him. Today, if an *Avatar* comes and makes some decisions, we will be able to recognise the same as divinity, only by putting such decisions into practice.

If in our houses, we put up a few plants, we also put up fences to protect them. If somebody comes from outside and looks at us working, we are afraid that they will think that we are working like servants. This is not how we should shape our lives. We should shape our lives according to our decisions and irrespective of what others think about us. We should never care for what others think about us. We should be very careful in what

we do and we alone should decide whether it is good or bad. The decision should be based on our own *guna* or thought. Respect or disrespect which others give have no meaning. These are simply words.

There is a small story to illustrate this. In a village, there were two individuals. One of them always used a horse for making his journeys. The second individual would make all his journeys by walking with a pillow in his hand. One day, both of them had to start for the same village at the same time. On that occasion, the man who was accustomed to carrying the pillow led the way. Behind him was the person travelling on horseback. On the way, there was another small village through which both these persons passed. The villagers looked at the individual carrying the pillow and thought that he was carrying a bundle of papers. They thought that he was a peon carrying the papers ahead of the master coming behind. They looked at the man on horseback and they thought that he was the officer. In early days, because there were no cars, all the officers used to make their journeys on a horse back. That is why the villagers thought that way.

As soon as they reached the destination, the man with the pillow went directly into a rest house and sat in a comfortable and boastful manner, resting himself on the pillow. The other person was looking round for a place to tie up his horse. The villagers looked at both of them and thought that the man with the pillow was the

officer and the man trying to tie up the horse was the peon. This is how respect and disrespect take shape in the world. The person who was thought to be an officer in one village was thought to be a peon in another village. The person who was thought to be a peon in the former village was thought to be the officer in the latter village. This is only imagination on the part of the onlookers and flows from the minds of people.

In this process, neither respect nor disrespect has come to either of them as a result of intrinsic worth. In a dream, a king may have the feeling that he is a beggar and a beggar may have the feeling that he is a king. As soon as this king and the beggar wake up, they see their natural form. The king has not become a beggar nor has the beggar become a king. This respect or disrespect which they have felt in their dream is of no value at all and are like the passing clouds.

Divyatma Swarupas, students!

You should be prepared to do selfless service. You should never think of being served by others. You have the strength of the body, mind and spirit at this age and therefore you should do service to others right now. You should serve old, hungry and weak people. Such service should be regarded by you as service to God. On the other hand, if you are anticipating that someone will serve you, your life will be going along a dark path.

Many of us in affluence are accustomed to get work done by servants. We feel the position of authority

and think that we are entitled to service, but this is going to result in a situation wherein you have to repay the debt of service back to others. What you see, what you do and what you say, will always come back to you as resound and reflection.

We must train ourselves in such a way that we can do our own work and after that we must be ready to serve our parents. We should then plunge into the society and be prepared to serve the society. This service must come from within you in a free and voluntary manner. We should not prepare ourselves to do work for the sake of showing it to others. It is for the sake of *prema* and love that we should do work. We should be prepared to do work as a consequence of our realising the oneness of all mankind. If there is an individual who is suffering in a hospital without anyone to look after him and is without any friends, if any of you go to the hospital in those circumstances and talk to him sweetly, you will establish a close bond of affection between you both. This will make you a closer friend of his than even his own relatives. He will take your address and will want to write to you. This is the kind of heart to heart relationship which selfless service can establish. This comes spontaneously from the heart. Nobody can create this kind of attachment by other methods.

An individual who may be a prime minister today will be received at a railway station with hundreds of garlands and hundreds of cars will be waiting for him.

Many persons will be anxious to get into one car or the other along with him. But the moment the position of authority goes, even a rickshaw man will ask him to pay the rickshaw fare. The meaning of this is that if you foolishly try to establish some kind of status and relationship by your position of authority, that status and relationship will not hold for long. On the other hand, if you establish relationship by the *Atma* way, that will be a permanent and true relationship. This kind of relationship will also take the shape of true *bhakti* or devotion. This is truly sacred and comes from the bottom of the heart, irrespective of whether others will value it or not. In this kind of service, given to an individual from the bottom of your heart, you will not even care if the elders in your house deter you from doing such service.

Unfortunately today, they talk of social service in many ways in our country. This kind of service often deserves the name “showy work” and not “social work”. There are many leaders who want to do social work. They take a broom stick and sweep the streets, call a photographer and obtain a photograph of themselves holding the broom stick, and take care to see that the photograph appears in the newspaper.

Never should one go into that kind of publicity. Never should one develop such an ego. All service should come from your heart. By spending ten rupees

on feeding ten people, those who want publicity will spend another twenty rupees on a photographer and on publicity. If they can spend this twenty rupees also on feeding the poor, how nice it will be.

Many people who are members of a Rotary Club or a Lions Club or such other clubs talk of doing service. One does not understand whether they are doing service or spending money. These members are often telling one another what to do. They are affluent persons and if once in a month they feed poor people, that will be the right thing. On the other hand, they have a weekly dinner and for each dinner, they spend over twenty rupees per head. The break down for this expenditure is five rupees for the meal, five rupees for mutton and another ten rupees for the wine. This expenditure, with such a break down is given the name of social service. How nice would it be if these twenty rupees are spent on feeding poor people. In future, if one of you are going to be a member of such clubs you should bear in mind these facts and realise what correct service is. Thereby you will avoid such mistakes.

People who are suffering, people who are immersed in sorrow and people who are helpless, should be your real friends. You should help such people. This is what you should accept as your primary duty. There is great trouble in being friendly with rich people. It is true that you should cultivate friendship with all, but if

you make a rich person your friend, you will be tempted to ask him for a loan and this will cut off your friendship, because you will be afraid that whenever he sees you, he will ask for the loan to be paid back. You should be friendly with everyone but you should be careful in choosing a true friend. Your true friends are those who are ready to accept your service. Your service will give you a bright future.

Do not develop ego about your capacities while doing service. Be humble and think that God has given you an opportunity to do service. Whatever you do to others, your feeling must be that you are serving yourself. In fact and in truth, whatever service you are doing to others, you are doing it for yourself. Today, a friend of yours comes to your house and you give him coffee. This good act of yours will get imprinted in his heart. When you go to his house, he will in turn receive you warmly and give you coffee. Thus, the service that you have done today will be returned to you in future.

In another context, if a friend of yours who has no direct help enters a hospital and you help him, he will help you in return when you need it. So you should regard the good that you do as something which you are putting in as a reserve for your future. Whatever you may do, good and bad, if you do it with the feeling that you are doing it for yourself, you will never do bad to yourself.

In this summer class, we have a programme to do social service on every Sunday. You should bear in mind that social service is an important thing, wherever you may be. You should make your body and mind sacred by doing such service. I hope and bless you that you develop such sacred and selfless ideals.

కంటే పాఠా? కష్ట పుత్రం?
 సంసార బాధలు మతావలంబం
 కష్టత్రం వా? కుట్ర అయితా?
 కష్టం అంతయ! ఆది హిందూ ఆంధ్రం

వికలభార్య అంకె వదిలిబుద్ధుడు?
 ఎంత బ్రతికినా యీ సంసారము?
 వికలబాధ? కష్టం? కష్టం వల్లం?
 కష్టమి కష్టం కష్టం కష్టం