

Chapter 8. Loving Service

Work done with no concern or desire for profit, purely out of love or from a sense of duty, is *yoga*. Such *yoga* destroys one's animal nature and transforms one into a divine being. Serving others, visualising them as kindred *Atmas*, will help one to progress; it will save one from sliding down from the spiritual stage attained. Selfless service (*seva*) is far more salutary than even vows and worship (*puja*). Service disintegrates the selfishness latent in you; it opens the heart wide; it makes the heart blossom.

So, work done with no desire is the supreme ideal; and when the mansion of life is built on that foundation, through the subtle influence of this basis of selfless service, virtues will gather unto him. Service must be the outer expression of inner goodness. And, as one undertakes selfless service more and more, one's consciousness expands and deepens and one's *Atmic* reality is more clearly known.

This ideal of selfless service (*seva*) and the urge to practise it form the very heart of education. Pure love, its chief manifestation—that is education. Nothing else can be. God loves those who do good to mankind as His dear children. They are ideal brothers and sisters for their countrymen. They deserve and achieve the awareness of *Atma*.

Whoever assigns their wealth, strength, intellect, and devotion toward the promotion of the progress of mankind is to be considered as a person to be revered. Those who observe the holy vow of service, unsullied by thoughts of self are born for a noble purpose.

Vow of loving selfless service

Prompted by the urge to advance the progress of others, a person who dedicates their wealth, skill, and intelligence, their position and status, becomes truly great. Such a one is the purposeful seer for the world. Such a one fulfils unfailingly the vow of selfless service. One who is conscious of the basic duties and obligations and spends days in carrying them out in practice will be in supreme peace, wherever one may be. Through one's influence, the neighbourhood will also share that peace.

Spiritual learning (*vidya*) impels one to pour one's narrow ego into the sacrificial fire and foster in its place universal love, which is the foundational base for the super structure of spiritual victory. Love that knows no limits purifies and sanctifies the mind. Let the thoughts centre around God, let the feelings and emotions be holy, and let activities be the expression of selfless service. Let the mind, heart, and hand be thus saturated in good. Spiritual education has to take up this task of sublimation. It must first instil the secret of service. Service rendered to another has to confer full joy in all ways. Spiritual education must emphasise that in the name of service (*seva*), no harm, pain, or grief should be inflicted on another.

While rendering service, the attitude of its being done for one's own satisfaction should not tarnish it. Service has to be rendered as an essential part of the process of living itself. This is the real core of spiritual education (*vidya*). As brick and mortar are to a house that is being built, the activity of service needs the spiritual illumination that can strengthen our resolve to purify our thought, word, and deed in order to carry out our duties. Spiritual education such as this is the key to the country's progress.

Service as dedicated worship

What exactly is the secret of ensuring peace and prosperity for mankind? Rendering service to others without expecting service from them in return. Activity (*karma*) that binds is a huge fast growing tree. The axe that can cut its roots is this: Do every act as an act of worship to glorify the Lord. This is the real sacrifice (*yajna*), the most important ritual. This sacrifice promotes and confers knowledge of Brahman (*Brahma-vidya*). Note that the yearning to do selfless service must flow in every nerve of the body, penetrate every bone and activate every cell. Those who engage themselves in spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) must have mastered this attitude toward service.

Selfless service (*seva*) is the blossom of love (*prema*), a flower that fills the mind with rapture. Harmlessness is the fragrance of that flower. Let even your little acts be redolent with compassion and reverence; be assured that your character would thereby shine greatly. The highest happiness is contentment. Where there is no harshness, holiness will thrive and virtue will flourish. Where greed exists, vice will breed thick. One must completely destroy the urge to live an isolated life, like a lone bull. Do not entertain such a wish even in dreams.

Spiritual learning (*vidya*) instructs you to remember yourself first. After transforming yourself, try to reform others: that is the advice offered by spiritual knowledge. The delusive attachment to the objective world can be uprooted by means of selfless service rendered as worship to the Lord. Devotion to the motherland, love of the motherland—these are to be reckoned as far less than love and devotion toward all mankind. Genuine spiritual devotion (*bhakti*) is characterised by love for all, at all times, everywhere.

Your nature is revealed by your acts, your gestures, your looks, your speech, your feeding habits, your dress, your gait. Therefore, pay attention to ensure that your speech, your movements, your thoughts, your behaviour are all right—full of love, pure (*sathwic*), and devoid of wildness and waywardness.

Ignorance conquered by faith, devotion, and patience

You have to develop the humility to believe that you have much good to learn from others. Your enthusiasm, your strong ambition, your resolution, your capacity to work, your store of knowledge, your wisdom—these have to be related to all others and not utilised for you alone. Your heart should take all others in. Your thoughts too should be patterned on those broad lines. Treat each trouble you encounter as a fortunate opportunity to develop your strength of mind and to toughen you with greater hardihood.

Eating food is a holy ritual (*yajna*). It should not be performed during moments of anxiety or emotional tension. Food has to be considered as medicine for the illness of hunger and as the sustenance of life.

The characteristic of nature is “to manifest as manifold”; the characteristic of the Divine is “to absorb into unity”. So, those who dislike or hate another or demean and denigrate another are indeed fools, for they thereby dislike, hate, demean, or denigrate only themselves! But they are unaware of this truth. Spiritual knowledge (*vidya*) instructs one to become established in this truth and demonstrate the underlying divinity.

In the garden of the heart, one must plant and foster the rose of divinity, the jasmine of humility, and generosity as the champak (a magnolia tree whose flowers are used to make perfume). In the medicine chest of each student must be kept in readiness tablets of discrimination, drops of self-control, and three powders: faith, devotion, and patience. By the use of these drugs, one can escape the serious illness called ignorance (*a-jnana*).

There are many destructive forces in the world, but, luckily, there are also, constructive forces. Students of spiritual learning should not turn into worshipers of bombs and mechanical contrivances (*yantras*). They must

transform themselves into active persons worshiping God (Madhava) and *mantras*. Authority and power are powerful intoxicants. They pollute and poison people until they are destroyed. They breed misfortune. But spiritual knowledge will confer wholeness and good fortune on them.