

13. He too is He

SOME people hope to accumulate merit by charity; others feel that asceticism is superior; still others adhere strictly to what they believe *Sanaathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) to be, considering it a better way to secure Divine Grace. But these, and even the highly praised path of *sathya* (truth) and *dharma* (righteousness), are not as fruitful as the path of *seva* (service). This sacred land of Bhaarath has earned great renown in the world for its consistent practice of this ideal of service through sacrifice.

Embodiments of the Divine *Aathman* (Self)! Shiva is Omnipresent; He is the Inner Motivator of all beings. He is ever present, everywhere, in our realm as well as in the realms around us. This fundamental truth has to be firmly believed in by every Seva Dhal (Voluntary Service Corps) member, and, realising this, he has to be humble and full of reverence towards all. You have to encounter various contrary gusts of passion, emotion, impulse, and intellectual doubt. Nevertheless, bear them bravely and overcome them through prayer and meditation.

The Lord, too, will provide many tests to ensure that your faith is firm, that your spirit of *seva* is full and universal. The weaker practitioners of this *seva saadhana* (service-centred spiritual effort) will soon be shaken by these tests, and stray away from the right path. The six enemies---lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and hatred---that lie in wait to foil their *saadhana* (spiritual effort), overpower the inner urge and make them slaves of the merely physical and material.

Keep "Heads in the forest, Hands in society"

The Seva Dhal member who shines in the splendour of the faith that "God is in himself and equally so in all," can transform the members of his family, his neighbours, the society in which he lives and the country to which he belongs, for the better. His love and light will bring him, unasked, a great deal of respectful attention.

As a preliminary to *seva* you have to win purity of heart. You must examine your motives and skills, your intentions and qualifications, and discover for yourself what you hope to achieve through the *seva*. You should ferret out any trace of egotism, and also the desire for fame or even of being near Swaami. If you have an irrepressible urge to possess things that contribute to your comfort or sense of superiority over others who are your friends or kith and kin, then the sooner you leave the Dhal the better.

You have heard some basic directions that I have been continuously giving. I have been telling you to deal with them as directions for life. "Duty is God; Work is Worship," and another dictum, "Heads in the forest, Hands in society." Do deeds that are holy and beneficial, untarnished by ego and the greed to benefit. Start on the sacred pilgrimage to the Divine Goal and make every minute of your life holy and purposeful. Then, surely, this earth, your *karmakshethra* (field of work), will be transformed into a *dharmakshethra* (field of righteousness).

While judging the *seva* done by a member of the Dhal, it is not the quantity or number of individual instances that matter; they do not count at all. Judge rather the motive that led him to serve, the genuineness of the love and compassion with which the *seva* was saturated. You may explain that it was your duty and so you had to do it; you may say that it was a responsibility which was imposed on you by the scarf and badge. But the explanation that appeals to Swaami is

that you did the *seva* with no taint of ego, and that you derived unsurpassed *aanandha* (bliss) as a result.

Do not hesitate to practise humility

Preliminary to any *seva*, you have to *uproot* all egotistic tendencies, get rid of all sense of mine and thine and burn to ashes the pride that comes of the feeling that you are offering service to someone poorer and less fortunate. I find that the members of the Seva Dhal seldom aim to attain this stage. They are still growing the thorny bush of ego in their hearts. And the thorns are bound to hurt them more than they do others. The feelings of 'I' and 'mine' are at the root of all the misery in the world.

Do not hesitate to practise humility and obedience, discipline and compassion. Give up pride at your status, wealth, scholarship or official position. "Can I, a big officer, a rich merchant, a great scholar, a man highly respected in society, descend to this level of chumming with this sorrowing man?" Do not ask such silly questions. Every one of these qualifications of which you boast will disappear with death, or sometimes, sooner. The *aanandha* that you give, the love that you share, these alone will be your lasting possessions.

Watch for the Divinity latent in every man

Others not motivated by the spiritual urge might ridicule you, caricature your activities and even put obstacles in your path. But do not lose grip over your courage or hate such persons. Do not yield to anger. Watch for the Divinity that is latent in every man. That will give you peace and fortitude. Pay attention to the One that is the Truth of the many. You have met statewise, in groups, and arrived at certain conclusions about the types of *seva*. These have been presented now.

Rajesh Khanna from Delhi showed you the mini first-aid box that each Seva Dhal member can carry in his pocket so that he may be ready at any moment for any eventuality. It is indeed a good idea which can be taken up by other states. Health is the primary requisite for all activities--physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. Any injury or illness that affects it adversely has to be attended to with loving care.

But more essential than these aids is another type of *seva*. Carry in the inner pocket, the heart, a box with a few tablets of discrimination, an ounce or two of sense-control and a few packets of powder prepared as the mixture of love and forbearance. Use this box to infuse courage and compassion in others and in yourself.

Sense-control will guard against all evils

Sense-control will guard you against a host of evils. Do not believe that because you are equipped with the senses nothing harmful can happen through their free exercise. You may have your car registered in your own name and be driving it yourself, but if you do not apply the brakes timely, accidents are bound to be your lot. Your body can be compared to a car. Your eyes are like the lights; your stomach, the petrol tank; your mouth, the horn; your mind, the steering wheel; *dharma* (right action), *artha* (wealth), *kaama* (desire) and *moksha* (liberation), the wheels; the air within the tyres is faith and intelligence, *buddhi* (intellect), the switch.

The worship of *jeeva* (individual being), which is the other name for *seva* can be worthwhile only when the heart is pure. All the various types of service that one may write and talk about are

mere empty, boasts if the mind of the *sevak* (volunteer) is not pure. A heart bubbling with *aanandha* and a mind saturated with love may do any tiny bit of *seva*, yet that will win much more Grace than huge projects undertaken in pride and pomp.

Nowadays, faith in God and goodness has declined. The means have become subordinate to the end. Success is sought by fair means or foul, foul means being the first resort. Misuse of official position, terrorising ignorant and innocent people to get one's way, creating situations of fear and despair, to undermine the moral strength of people---these have become accepted tactics. Victory won through questionable means is as shameful as defeat; defeat, while pursuing honest and compassionate means, is to be welcomed as victory. When you do not stray from the straight path, when you hold fast to truth and when you do not lose courage, your failure is as creditable as success.

Seva Dhal members should not become machine-minded and mechanical. They must have faith not in *yanthra* (machine), but in *manthra* (sacred formulas). They must consider each living being to be a part of the One God. You select a bamboo which is straight and long. But when selecting a cane, you look to the sugar content. Similarly, do not select Seva Dhal members for any qualification other than the *saadhana* by which they are aware of the Divinity in each individual.

Sai is the Inner inspiration for each worker

I advise through another slogan also: "Even if you cannot oblige, you can at least speak obligingly." This means that you have to cleanse your speech of cynicism and satire and be ever sincere and sweet. You may differ from co-workers on methods and programmes, but this should not leave a scar on your heart. Office-bearers in this Organisation are leaders who bear the brunt themselves, guides who walk along the path they wish others to take. They shall not command or punish, they can only persuade and advise.

The name of Sathya Sai is attached to each wing of this organisation. It is Sai that inspires each activity of each wing. This fact has not been taken to heart by many of you. Sai is the Inner inspiration and light for each worker. The different wings should not feel free to act according to the whims and fancies of the members or office-bearers. Each is dependent on the other. When a thorn pricks the foot, the eye sheds tears. There is a Divinity that moves and motivates the entire system of physical, mental and intellectual activity in the body: *Anthar bahischa thath sarvam, vyaapya Naaraayana sthithah* (Inside and outside, all that is, is saturated with God). When one organ is happy, all are happy. When one limb is ill, all are in misery.

Feeling of hatred is a serious sin

The name, *Dhal*, that you bear, has another great significance. *Dhal* means the petal of a flower. The lotus has as many as a thousand petals. They all emanate from the central *karnika* (pericarp). Each petal draws its strength, sustenance, colour, fragrance, and charm from the *karnika*. Detached from the *karnika* the petal cannot survive. That attachment and that affection can be secured when the petal clings to the ideals of 'Sai and the lessons of Sai. In My Message to you, there is no scope for your seeing differences or distinctions among those you see. *Lokaassamasthah sukhino bhavanthu* (May every being in all the worlds be happy). That Is My wish and blessing.

Cultivating prema (divine love) is the one and only *saadhana* that can endow you with this outlook and faith. If there arises in the Samithi or Seva Dhal or Mahila Vibhaag, any feeling of hatred between members, clash of opinions or envy against some other member, treat it as a serious sin. It is a sacrilege, an act of treason against the organisation itself. Let the past be past, for that we cannot recover. Let us not brood over what has already happened. But from this moment, give up envy, pride and hatred in your hearts and plant therein, love and mutual help. Give up the pernicious habit of seeking faults in others; seek first the faults in yourself. You discover faults only because you have those faults. Faultless people can never find fault in others.

Inner cleanliness is important for *sevak*s

We have here ten thousand Seva Dhal members, trained and dedicated for *seva*. However I doubt that you are being sincere in your duty to yourself and to others. As part of rural service you go into the villages adopted by the *samithis* and repair roads, clear drains, give some medicines, conduct *bhajan*, (devotional songs sung in groups) and deliver lectures. Is this the work that the Sathya Sai Seva Dhal has to do? Suppose you have a glass which you use to drink water from. Is it enough if the glass is cleaned on the outside? Inner cleanliness, inner health, inner illumination---these are far more important and the Sathya Sai Seva Dhal has to take them up in a big way.

Find out how many families are in misery and poverty on account of the evil habits of their bread-winners. Drinking, gambling and other vices have to be tackled with humility and love, through persuasion and even personal submission. Even the government builds hospitals, provides roads, arranges for water supply and caters to their other material needs. But only a spiritual, band of *saadhakas* (spiritual aspirants) like you can succeed in reforming their habits and bringing them on the path of peace, prosperity and harmony.

Every effort to give the villager a few more coins through employment will only make things worse if his moral fibre is not made strong enough to overcome the temptations of drink and gambling. Lead him slowly and surely along the path of God and these habits will drop off one by one.

"Fight to the end" and "Finish the game"

Do not hope to gain Grace by looking down upon mankind and looking up' at Sai. Remember, also, that your dress, behaviour and appearance, will reveal your character and attitude towards others." Always have sweet, soft words on your tongue; cast your eyes only on holy sights. Wear' clean, simple clothes and do not imitate those who are fascinated by latest fashions in dress and style. How can you do *seva* when you move so far away from the common man? I advise you to 'Follow the Master.' By 'Master' I mean the Conscience within you, the 'Voice' of God. Only then can you 'Face the devil' and escape from his temptations unharmed. And you must be ever vigilant that old habits and past attitudes do not come home again. Thus following the third rule of 'Fight to the end,' you finally gain the victory in the fourth round: 'Finish the game.'

From the moment of birth, your breath has been proclaiming your Reality, for it repeats incessantly the *manthra* (sacred formulae), '*Soham*' (I am He, I am *Shivam*). Be conscious of this and you can never be wrong. You can never injure or insult anyone, for he too is He. Once that repetition of *Soham* stops, man is reduced to *shavam* (a corpse). Therefore cultivate the Divine qualities of love, compassion, humility and reverence for all living beings, reverence towards the

earth and all the other elements. You can thus draw upon yourself the Grace of God and render you life beneficial and fruitful.

IV All India Seva Dhal Conference, 22-11-1978