

56. The message of brotherhood

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine! The Cosmos is permeated by God. What we call the *jagath* is the world in which we are born, grow and return to the place from where we came. The earth is the base for our world. On this earth ceaselessly, inside and outside, night and day, everywhere, we have the air blowing, but it is not visible to the eye. Man spends his time in various activities; eating and resting. When we look up, we see the boundless sky. During the day we see the Sun shining gloriously. At night, there is darkness. Wherever we turn, we see mountains, rivers, trees, houses and mansions. All these beautiful things are visible to the eye.

In the story of man, the first activity which he developed was agriculture. Every living thing feels hunger and searches for food. The first cry of a child is for milk and the moment it gets fed, it goes to sleep. Food is thus the first essential thing for every living thing. This food comes primarily from land. This is the reason why from the earliest times the people of Bhaarath worshipped the earth as the giver of food, as a *Bhuumaatha* (Mother Earth). It is by cultivating land that man has sustained himself all these centuries.

Along with this, other activities developed. As the population grew, villages grew into towns. With the growth of civilised communities, arguments arose between men as to the cause of their happiness and sorrow and how man could get over them. In these enquiries some enlightened persons, examining their own experiences, discovered some essential truths. Some others, who were wiser, realised that there were things beyond what has been known.

Conclusion of great enquiring minds

The questions that were asked were: "What is it that we should really learn?" "What are the things which are beyond our powers?" "It is clear that we cannot create the earth. We cannot create water. We cannot survive even for ten minutes if we do not have air to breathe. That is not all. In real life we find that we are unable to understand the secret of birth and death. Many who tried to discover the nature of death, to find out what happens after death and what is the mystery behind death could find no answer. Hence, those who were endowed with deep enquiring minds came to the conclusion that there is a power which underlies all living things and that power is derived from the Divine. They described that power as God. They concluded that there was divine power, which was beyond man's logic and which pervaded the Universe.

What is this power? How are we to recognise a thing which is not visible to the eye? Are we to believe in it? Some scientists consider that it is impossible to know this thing. But, the ancients regarded the Sun as a demonstrable evidence of the existence of divinity. They felt that without the Sun, the world will cease to exist. Nothing can grow without the Sun. No human activity would be possible. Man will not be able to survive endless darkness. Hence, they felt that this great source of light and energy was proof of the existence of a divine spiritual power.

Later, a controversy arose as to whether this Divine Principle is One or many. They came to the conclusion that God is only One, *Ekam Sath*, and could only be One. The *Vedhas* also declare, "*Ekoham Bahusyaam*" (I am One manifesting as many). Thereby, they proclaimed the unity of the Divine. Although the Divine is only one, it appears as many to different persons.

***Pranava* is the origin of all knowledge**

It is in this spirit of profound enquiry that our sages and seers performed *thapas* (penance). By their penance and austerities, they discovered that the *Pranava* is the origin of all knowledge. If the *Pranava (Om)* did not exist, there would be no sound and no speech. Similarly the numeral "One" is the basis for all numbers. All numbers are obtained by adding more and more ones to the primary number One. Thus it was realised that this "One-ness" is the essential quality of the Divine and the diversity that is seen in the world is only a manifestation of the Divinity. The Divine was regarded as the primary seed of the diversified Universe. The seed requires husk for it to grow. The husk is the cover and inside is the seed. Similarly, for the seed, which is God, the husk is the Universe. Without the seed, the husk cannot exist.

It is in recognition of this fact that the *Maharishis* (great sages) declared; "*Ishaa Vaasyam Idham Sarvam.*" (This entire Universe is permeated by the Divine). Can this vast Universe, which is sustained by Divinity be regarded as different from the Divine? Whatever is associated with the Divine is a reflection of the Divine. When the *Purusha Sooktha* (hymn on the Supreme Divine Person) describes the Divine as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and thousand feet, it is proclaiming the Divinity that pervades the Universe in numerous forms. This also means that every object is a part of the Divine and the Cosmos, composed of these myriad forms, was described as the "*Vishwa Viraat*"---the Cosmic Being. The *Vishwa Viraat* is not a figure drawn by a painter like Ravi Varma or a person described by a poet. It is the form of the Cosmic Divine Person.

One must accept the authority of the *Vedhas*

We must look upon this multi-faceted Universe, with its myriad beings as the Cosmic expression of the One Divine Entity. The Divine principle (*Dhaivathwa*) is immanent in the smallest body and in the whole of creation. "*Yathaa Andaande, Thathaa Brahmaande.* (As in the small egg, so in the Cosmic Egg). The *Andaanda* represents the individual and the *Brahmaanda* represents the whole Cosmos. If we are able to understand the truth of the individual, then we shall know the truth about the Universe.

What is the evidence for determining the Divine nature of the Cosmos? Students, puffed up with a little knowledge, ask how any one can believe in the Divine nature of the Universe when it is not demonstrable. Such persons are forgetting their own inherent Divine nature. Does the misguided person base all his knowledge on the objective, physical form of what he calls the "mind"? If it has no physical shape, how does he "see" his mind? One says, "I am happy." What is the physical form of "happiness?" To seek direct physical evidence for everything is a sign of insolence.

Only *Jnaanis* (liberated persons), who have realised the Divine, can demonstrate the nature of the infinite Divinity, and not others. Let me give a small example. One individual asks another, "Who is your father?" You had no eyes to see your father before birth. Nor did you have the intelligence to find out who your father was?" The second man replies, "The proof for my statement is derived from my mother, who told me who my father was." This shows that on a matter so vital as to who his father was, he accepts the statement of his mother and believes it all his life. In the same manner you must accept the authority of the *Vedhas* (sacred scriptures of the Hindhus) regarding your Divine Father.

One cannot discover God without effort

Some time or other at some place or other, in some world or other, the inscrutable Divine incarnates for the purpose of upholding *Dharma* (righteousness). It takes a recognisable form which is related to the occasion, the time, the place and other circumstances determining Its advent. Do the idle gossip-mongers who indulge in atheistic propaganda make any earnest and sincere effort to find out the nature of the Divine? Without such effort how can the sacred character of the Divine be discovered? Special efforts are necessary even for discovering the fire that is in a piece of wood, the butter that is in milk, the oil that is hidden in the seed or the sugar that is in the cane. If one sets out with zealous seriousness and devotion to discover God, one will certainly find Him.

The whole Universe, in fact, is sustained by the Divine. It is not a human creation. Every person must cultivate belief in God and develop devotion. God exists in every person, permeating every cell of his body. But if you cut a person to pieces, you cannot find Him in the different parts. You will only find flesh, bones, blood, etc. Proper methods must be adopted by man to discover the Divinity within him. It is because people do not make efforts in the proper way that we have at present confusion, chaos and discontent everywhere.

Build a genuine sense of brotherhood

Today it is the duty of all those who are connected with the Sathya Sai Organisations to promote spiritual discipline and dedicate their lives to social service for leading a purposeful life. To promote the awareness of Divinity in human beings and build a genuine sense of brotherhood among people, should be their primary aim.

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit! Realise that you are not this body, this mind, this intellect or this intelligence. You are embodiments of the Divine. Concentrate all your efforts to realise that. There is nothing that cannot be achieved by yearning and continuous practice. The ancient *religion---Sanaathana Dharma* (Eternal Universal Religion) has indicated many paths through which the Divine can be realised.

Spiritual practice is essential for realisation of the Divine. Whatever books you may read, you cannot realise the Divine merely by intellectual effort. One must put into practice, what one has learnt from books or other sources. Without spiritual practice and discipline, it is futile to read books or listen to discourses or meet persons, however great.

Observing rules is part of spiritual discipline

Some changes have now been made in the Rules of the Sathya Sai Organisations. You may ask, "What is the need for rules and regulations for those engaged in spiritual quest?" The reason will be clear from a simple example. When you plant a sapling, you protect it in the early stages of its growth, erecting a fence around it so that animals may not harm it. After the plant has grown into a sturdy tree, there is no need for the fence. Similarly, even in the spiritual path, one has to observe some restrictions and restraints so that one's spiritual growth may not be affected by what is happening in the outside world.

In the Sathya Sai Organisations we call our members, 'brothers and sisters of the Sai Family.' Whether a member is from America or Japan or Germany or Russia---he is a brother. If all members are brothers, how can we have different rules for America, Japan or Germany? Some members from Western countries do not seem to favour the rule of the Sathya Sai Organisation,

which lays down that at *bhajans* (Group singing of devotional songs) and at other meetings, men devotees should sit apart from women devotees. The rule should be applicable to all members--- whether they are Indians or non-Indians, in India or elsewhere. It is a part of the spiritual discipline that is necessary for devotees. Even a great warrior like Arjuna confessed to Lord Krishna: "The mind is fickle and is very difficult to control." If even Arjuna found it difficult to control his senses, how much more necessary it is for us to have some regulations to control our own minds?

Try to function in coordination with others

There is a demand that different wings of the Sathya Sai Organisation such as the *Samithi*, the Study Circle and the Seva Dhal should be allowed to function independently. This is not a proper approach. All these different units should function in friendly co-operation with each other. Here are the five fingers of My hand; the Seva Samithi (Service Organization) is one finger; the Mahila Vibhaag (Women's Wing) is another; the Seva Dhal (Service Corps) is the third; the Bala Vikas (Children's Wing) is the fourth and the Bhajan Mandali (congregational Singing Group) is the fifth. If you keep each finger off from the other, what is it that they can handle? If, on the other hand, all the five function together, what is it that cannot be achieved? All our Sathya Sai Organisations should learn to function in coordination with each other. Like the rivers which have joined the ocean, they have become one, under the banner of the International Sai Movement.

In this connection, there seem to be some doubts amongst our members regarding the international aspect of the Sathya Sai Organisation. The role of members of the World Council is not properly understood. Some members in some countries wish to elect their representatives to the World Council. Should the representatives be 'elected' or 'appointed' and who is to appoint such representatives. Such questions are being raised by devotees in some countries. By such questioning there is a danger that politics may enter the Organisation. In the fight for office through elections, among the devotees love will be the victim. Self-love will be misused in the process. If we are to build the Sathya Sai Organisations on the basis of love and confidence, we must have selection and that selection should be made by the Central Council. If elections are allowed, groupism and all kinds of controversies and differences will emerge.

The basis for all service is Love

Embodiments of Love! The whole world knows what sacred ideals inspire the Sathya Sai Organisations. It is true that in a big bag of rice a few grains of sand may get in. Any human Organisation is bound to have a few black sheep. But, that will not affect the organisation, as long as it is true to its principles. The kind of service and sacrifice which the Sathya Sai Organisations are rendering is colossal. The basis for all that is love that prevails among the members. From ancient times, the *Upanishathic* prayer said: "*Sahanaa Vavathu; Sahanau Bhunakthu*" ("May He protect US all; may He nourish US all.") The spirit of oneness proclaimed in these *manthras* (sacred formulae) is operative today only in the Sathya Sai Organisation. That sense of oneness can only be promoted by the practice of love and not by any other means.

Look at what happened during this World Conference. Many wealthy persons, who had been used to a life of ease, many who had not done any arduous labour in their lives, had come here for the conference. Persons, who had been accustomed to living in commodious houses, had to stay here in small over-crowded apartments. They put up with many inconveniences and did not

ask for any facilities. Wherever they were accommodated, they accepted the place out of devotion to Swaami. This kind of accommodative spirit and readiness to bear discomfort and difficulty cannot be found in any other Organisation or in any other gathering. Moreover, there are organisations in which the young and the old render different types of social service. But, only in the Sathya Sai Organisations can you find all the people rendering service in a completely selfless spirit.

"Service to man is Service to God."

Sometime ago, in the East and West Godhaavari Districts and in the Krishna District lakhs of pilgrims gathered for the Pushkara festival. The magnitude of the devoted and dedicated service rendered by the Sathya Sai Organisation, by men and women at those festivals can only be realised by those who saw them there. Again, in anticipation of Swaami's Birthday celebrations, the members of many Sathya Sai Organisations organised hospitality camps for devotees and visitors going to or returning from Prashaanthi Nilayam at places like Dharmavaram, Gunthakal, Kurnool and Baagepalli. Politicians talk about "Service to man is Service to God." But only members of the Sathya Sai Organisation actually live up to this slogan.

The decisions taken at this World Conference should not remain resolutions on paper. They must be put into practice. Everyone of you must live up to the ideals of the Organisation. Some members transgress the Rules of the Organisation. Some others do not live the ideals or carry out the programmes of the Organisation. Some office-bearers do not take an active part in the programmes. Such persons discourage other members. We should not be interested in money, office or position. Our sole aim is to promote love and all activities should be carried on in a spirit of love of each other. There is no greater source of strength, wealth or position than love.

Envy destroys all human qualities

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit: All those who join the Sathya Sai Organisation should bear in mind that they should be free from egoism. They should not lose their heads over such positions as State or District *or Samithi* President. As long as egoism persists, one is not fit to hold any office. It is better to get rid of such office-bearers. You must prepare yourself to be an exemplary *Sevak* (volunteer) and not a Leader. Only a "*Kinkara*" (one who is prepared to do any work) can become "*Shankara* (divine person)." You must therefore try to gradually suppress the sense of ego. The other evil, which you have to get rid of, is envy. There are persons who cannot bear the sight of other persons achieving prominence or advancement. This envy is a ruinous disease. It destroys all human qualities. It converts a man into a demon. You must see that the demon of envy does not enter your minds.

A third evil against which you have to guard yourself is *aadambaram* (ostentation). If somebody offers sweet rice as *prasaadh* (offering) at *bhajan*, another wants to show off by offering *laddus* (a sweet made of chicle pea flour). There is competition in spending money on various functions. The Sathya Sai Units should see that no money is wasted on unnecessary ostentatious arrangements. Misuse of money is evil.

There is another practice which should be discouraged. Even for carrying out very 'small functions money is being collected by some units. Every Unit has some well-to-do persons and if one or two of them can join, many activities can be carried on without raising funds from all and sundry. Take for instance, this great World Conference at Prashaanthi Nilayam. Many who do not know the facts must be wondering how much money must have been spent to finance this

Conference. The truth is that not a single naya paise was collected as donation. This Conference, which is an expression of the Love of the members, has no need for money. Everyone of you here has taken care of his or here own needs and discharged your duties without worrying about difficulties or inconveniences. No money is needed for deriving this kind of happiness.

It is deplorable to hear that in some States, even for trivial activities, funds are being collected. Even if some office-bearers are inclined to adopt this method, I want members not to encourage them.

There is one last thing that I should like to impress on you at this Conference. There are in our country numerous poor, 'helpless and diseased persons who suffer from hunger and thirst. There are to-day lakhs of members of Sathya Sai Organisations and even a larger number of Sathya Sai devotees. Let each member while leaving this conference resolve to feed at least one poor person every day.

When anyone comes to your doorstep asking for food, try to feed him with compassion. You should relieve hunger without anybody knowing about it. If all our Sathya Sai Organisations engage themselves in service to the poor and the needy, without any fanfare or exhibitionism, they will be giving expression to their sense of divine brotherliness and putting into practice Sai's teachings. *Prashaanthi Nilayam, 22-11-1980*