

## 29. Quenching the thirst

THE responsibilities of the Seva Dhal are of a high order. It has to lead the members, and through them all mankind, along the path of *saadhana* (spiritual effort), which takes the individual from the position 'I' to the position 'We.' This has given the Seva Dhal the importance it deserves. One can realise it only when one delves deep into its significance. You have to sublimate all work as worship and try to fill every moment of your lives with that outlook. Only then can you justify your membership in this Organisation.

Through activity man attains purity of consciousness. In fact man has to welcome activity with this end in view. And why strive for a pure consciousness? Imagine a well with polluted and muddy water so that the bottom of the well cannot

be seen. Similarly within man's heart, deep down in his consciousness, we have the *Aathman* (Divine Spirit). But it can be cognised only when the consciousness is clarified. Your imaginings, your Inferences, your judgements and prejudices, your passions, emotions and egoistic desires, muddy the consciousness and make it opaque. How, then, can you become aware of the *Aathman* that is at the very base? Through *seva* (service) rendered without any desire to placate one's ego and with only the well being of others in view is it possible to cleanse the consciousness and have the *Aathman* revealed.

### **By doing *seva*, you serve your own best interest**

So, for whose sake are you performing *seva*? You are doing *seva* for your own sake. You are engaged in *seva* in order that you may become aware of the *Aathman* in you, in order that you may discard the allurements of your ego, in order to know yourself and to get the answer to the question that torments you, namely, "Who am I." You do not serve others, you serve yourselves; you do not serve the world, you serve your own best interest.

You may ask: how is it possible to transcend the ego through *seva*? By saturating with love, work can be transformed into worship. When the work is offered to God, it gets sanctified into *puuja* (sacramental worship). This makes it free from ego. It is also freed from the earthly desire for success and the earthly fear of failure. You feel that when you have done the work as best as you can, your *puuja* is accomplished. It is then for Him who has accepted the *puuja* to confer on you what He considers best. This attitude will make the work *nish-kaama* (un-attached). Regular practice of this discipline will render the consciousness clear and pure. It will promote *chitthashuddhi* (pure consciousness). Without this primary equipment how can man ever hope to scale spiritual heights? Almost all the great sages of the past spent the early years of their lives in *saadhana* that would ensure a pure consciousness. However prospective your career might be, however much you might accumulate the wherewithal of a comfortable life, to whatever heights of authority you might have climbed through the exercise of your intelligence, your gains shall be nil unless your every activity is suffused with the Divine purity inherent in the consciousness.

### **You get blessed or punished due to your own acts**

I shall illustrate this point. Take an ordinary postal envelope. Upon it, in golden ink, write the address of a person in very artistic calligraphy. Insert a beautifully worded letter full of amazing sentiments, and then drop it into a post-box. What happens to it? It will not move even a yard away from that box.

Now take a mere post card, the cheap unimpressive thing. Write the address with no special care. Scribble the news you like to convey. Affix a stamp and drop it into the same box. Watch what happens! The artistically ornamental envelope is inert, while this inartistic, cheap, document travels a thousand miles towards the person indicated. Therefore, whatever may be the uniqueness or importance, the furore or attractiveness, the *seva* that you do can yield no fruit if it is done without a pure *chiththa* (thought).

Your yearning to do *seva* and your enthusiasm while doing *seva*, are rescuing you from harm. God is the witness. God has no desire to bless, nor anger to induce Him to punish. You get blessed and punished as a result of your own feelings and acts. *Yath bhaavam thath bhavathi*. As you think and behave so it becomes.

*Bad deeds never yield good,*

*Good deeds never breed bad.*

*Neem seeds never yield mangoes,*

*Mango seeds never breed neems.*

Hence a person might be an expert in many fields of 'knowledge or a master of many material skills and accomplishments, but without inner cleanliness, his brain is a desert waste or a massive stone with no trace of love, mercy or expansive virtue.

### **Rituals seldom purify man's consciousness**

Of the nine steps in spiritual *saadhana*, as laid down in the *Bhakthi Suuthras* (aphorisms on devotion), leading to the realisation of the self, *dhaasyam*, or the attitude of a servant to do *seva*, is quite near the final goal; it is the eighth step. The study of texts, the renouncing of wealth in charity, the repetition of the name or the chanting of psalms and hymns may be good exercises to sanctify the mind and to avoid falling into evil ways and ruinous pastimes, but they seldom purify the consciousness of man. Instead they serve mostly to bloat the ego and instil pride and promote a competitive craving for superiority. You may be sitting in the *bhajan* hall and loudly singing in chorus, but your mind may get involved in anxiety about the pair of *chappals* (sandals) you have left outside the hall. Always at the back of the mind there is fear of the loss of the *chappals*; this vitiates the *bhajan* and makes it a barren show.

### **Seva done to a suffering being reaches the Lord**

The *saadhana* of *seva* is quite distinct. In *seva* you devote all your energy and attention to the task at hand, for it is a dedicated task. You forget the body and ignore its demands. You set aside your individuality and its prestige and perquisites. You pluck your ego by its roots and cast it away. You give up your status, conceit, your name and form and keep all *chiththa* (thought) pure. Whatever the task you are performing, renounce your personal individuality and share its travails and troubles, its fruits and benefits, with God. You need not bring in God from somewhere outside you; He is in you, all the while. This truth must be your own discovery, your own treasure, your own strength. This is the grand purpose of the *Seva Dhal*. That is the reason why the *Seva Dhal* is assigned a high place in the Sathya Sai Organisation.

A very pious person was once proceeding from Kaashi to Raameshwaram, at the other end of this vast country. He was carrying with him some holy Ganga (Ganges) water to be mixed with the sea at Raameshwaram. That would be the consummation of his long and arduous pilgrimage through many a holy place and many a sacred river. While half-way through, he saw by the side

of the road a donkey in the last throes of life, since it was too Incapacitated to move towards some source of water to quench its thirst. Its dry tongue and rolling eyes indicated the agony of extreme thirst. The pilgrim was so moved by the tragic sight that he poured the precious Ganges water he had with him down the throat of the distraught animal. Moments later, the donkey recovered and could gain enough strength to pull itself out of the grip of death. Seeing this, the companion of the pilgrim asked him, "Master! The sacred water you brought from Kaashi had to be offered to the ocean at Raameshwaram. Why did you commit this sacrilege by pouring it into the mouth of this despicable animal?" The pilgrim replied, "But I have poured the holy water in the ocean itself, don't you see?" Any *seva* (service) done to a *suffering jeeva* (individual being) reaches the Lord Himself. and can never be a sacrilege, for *seva* to the *jeeva* is *seva* to *the dheva* (divinity). Always be firm in that belief.

### **The Play enacted by Shiva and Paarvathi**

Millions come to Kaashi as pilgrims. It is said that those who see Kaashi will not be born again. One day at Kailaasha, Paarvathi asked Shiva, "Lord, I have heard it said that all those who visit Kaashi, where there is a celebrated shrine for your worship, will attain Kailaasha and stay on there in your presence. Millions are coming to Kaashi, but is this place big enough to accommodate all of them?" Shiva replied, "All the millions cannot come to Kailaasha. I shall design a play and make clear to you who among the millions can come here. You, too, have a role to act. Do as I direct you to."

Paarvathi became an old hag of 80 and Shiva a rickety old man of 90. The old woman had the old man on her lap, right at the main entrance of the famous Shiva shrine of Vishweshwara, and she implored in piteous tones the pilgrims who passed by on their way to the temple, "My husband is terribly thirsty. He is about to die of thirst. I cannot leave him and go to the river Ganga to bring him water. Will any of you pour a little water down his throat and save his life?"

### **There is no prayer more fruitful than *Seva***

The pilgrims were coming up from the ghats after their ceremonial bath in the holy river, their clothes still wet and clinging to their bodies. Some of them lamented that their peace was disturbed by the sight of this pathetic couple. "We have come to take *dharshan* (audience) of the Lord, and look what meets our eye." There were some who flatly ignored her cries and lifted their noses in the air. Some said, "Wait. Let us finish the worship inside the temple and then we shall bring the Ganga water for you." No one offered to bring the needed help to the aged patient.

Just then a robber who was hurrying into the temple to pick a few pockets, heard the plaintive voice of old woman and halted near them. He asked her, "Mother, what is the matter?" She replied, "Son, we came to this place to have *dharshan* of Lord Vishweshwara of Kaashi, but my husband has fainted out of sheer exhaustion. He might survive if some one will bring a little Ganga water and pour it down his throat. I cannot leave him here and go for water. Please help me and earn the merit."

The robber was moved into compassion. He had a little Ganga water in the hollow gourd he had with him. He knelt down near the dying person on the lap of the old woman, but the woman stopped him saying, "The moment the Ganga water wets his throat, my husband may die; he is in the last stage of living. Therefore speak a word of truth and pour the water. The robber could not understand what she meant, so she explained, "Speak within his hearing, some good deed that

you have done in your life, and then pour the water In his mouth." That created a problem for the robber. He was at his wits end. He could not quite comply. He said, "Mother I have, in truth, not done any good deed so far. This present act, the offering of water to this thirsty man, is the very first good deed I am responsible for." And saying this, he placed the gourd at the lips of the old man and gave him mouthful.

Just at the moment, the couple disappeared and in their placed stood Shiva and Paarvathi, blessing the robber. Shiva said, "Son, life is to be dedicated for the service of others and not devoted to the exclusive interests of oneself. Howsoever many wicked deeds you might have done so far, for your selfless offering of Ganga water with truth on your tongue, We bless you with this Vision. Remember there is no morality higher than truth; there is no prayer more fruitful than *seva* (selfless loving service.)"

### **Three stages of enquiry into *Brahmam***

On the royal road to spiritual realisation, there are three stages as mentioned in the scriptures: *Karmajijnaasa*, *Dharmajijnaasa* and *Brahmaji-jnaasa*. *Jijnaasa* means deep Inquiry. A person becomes fit to inquire into *Brahman* and succeed in that inquiry only when his consciousness has been trained and shaped by Inquiry Into the modes of activity and mores of conduct---the karma (action) and the *dharma* (righteousness)---which clarify and purify. He who discriminates well before engaging In any activity will naturally be righteous in conduct and behaviour.

Good *Karma* will automatically lead to good *dharma*. Take the example of home-made coconut *chutney*. It is tasted only after it is ground and got ready, and when it is eaten you find out whether salt has been added or not. Then if you discover that the salt is not enough or that it has not been added, you have to add the needed quantity to make it tasty; but you will not add salt before eating a small amount. Hence the three stages are(i) Grinding and getting the *chutney* ready (ii) eating it, and (iii) adding the needed salt. The preparation is the karma, the eating is the *dharma* and the adding of salt to make it tasty and sustaining, is the *Brahman*. Act, dedicate and adore---that is the way to acquire a pure consciousness.

An act dedicated as an offering to the God resident in all becomes as sacred as the highest *seva*. Devote yourselves to this *seva*. *Avathaars* (divine incarnations) of God are engaged in *seva*; that is why *Avathaars* happen. Hence, when you offer *seva* to mankind, the *Avathaar* will naturally be pleased and you can win Grace. This is a great chance you have as members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dhal. I hope you will make the best use of this chance. I bless you that you may.

*Brindhaavan, 6-3-1977*