

OM SAI RAM!

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh,

PODCAST 230, “THE SECOND ASPECT: WHY SERVICE?”

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*The following text contains excerpts from Prof. Anil Kumar’s book
“Sai-Chology,” pg. 162 – 169.*

THE AIR MARSHAL'S WIFE

Once, Bhagawan gave an interview to an Air Marshal, Chief of Air Services. While talking to the family, suddenly Swami turned to the wife of the Air Marshal and asked, “When did you come”? She replied that she arrived the previous month. Then Swami asked the Air Marshal as to when he had arrived. The Air Marshal had come that morning.

Then Swami wanted to know why there was a gap between the arrival of the wife and the Air Marshal. It transpired that the Air Marshal's wife was serving as a *Seva Dal* in the Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital, doing sweeping duty. This lady swept the corridors of the hospital for one full month and the irony is that her family maintains a fleet of servants in their house in Delhi.

“LET ME TAKE YOU AROUND SUNDARAM”

Ten years ago, I had the opportunity to visit the Sundaram Temple in Chennai for the first time. As a matter of great luck, Swami personally showed me every room and I felt very happy. The place was abuzz with *Seva Dal* people doing their duty. Swami asked one of them and it was found that he was a professor in mechanical engineering, from the Institute of Engineering Technology, Chennai.

From this, we have to ponder and not consider ourselves “more” than anybody. Ego gives us a superiority complex. The more and more we comprehend that things have been going on all along (in spite of us), we come down to a state of humility and understanding that we are indeed insignificant in the scheme of things.

Then Swami asked a few other people about their background: One was the Director of Ashok Leyland Limited. The other was a Professor in Electrical Engineering from Guindy Engineering College, Chennai.

THEY ACCEPT IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY

There is a lesson to be learned from all this. These people, from exalted positions, accept *seva* as an opportunity. For them it is not menial work. It is a sin to consider any work as low or mean. Then nothing is achieved. Indeed, service is a golden opportunity and it is priceless because one is not paid for it. In spite of holding a high position when one does *seva*, it is one's worship to God.

We see such instances in Prasanthi Nilayam. One of them was the Head of the Department of Economics in Delhi University, with National and International recognition. He serves in Sai Kulwant Hall as a *Seva Dal* member – just carrying benches, chairs, mats, etc.

GIVING WHAT IS NEEDED

Many *Seva Dal* people are professionals and experts but they do small duties assigned to them as an offering to God. Spiritual service is not giving what you already have or know; it is giving only what is ***needed at that time***. That is important.

Once, because of over enthusiasm a *Seva Dal* volunteer went on distributing sweets to diabetic patients in the hospital. Now, this is not true *Seva*. True *Seva* is to do what is needed. It should be performed depending upon the need of the hour. So, spiritual *seva* requires us to do what is needed, not to use our specific skills.

THE SECOND ASPECT: WHY SERVICE?

“What is Service?” – We have already seen this aspect that service is to do what is needed, without being a servant and to perform this as an act of worship and offering to God. This is truly the spirit of service.

The second aspect: “Why service?” This tells us that it is not only “the spirit of service” that is important. There is something beyond, which is of greater importance and that is “**service to the spirit**”. This is the next higher step. It is the philosophy of service. When we serve religiously and spiritually, it is “**service to the spirit**”.

SERVICE IS AWARENESS

We should know that service is awareness, an exalted realisation of the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of the Lord. This is a spiritual understanding of Divinity. This perception helps us to know that our service is to the Spirit within, not to anybody.

Secondly, service is *Sadhana*, a spiritual path. All religions lay emphasis on this. In the nine paths of devotion, *padasevanam*, service to the Lotus feet, is the fourth step and is considered higher than the previous paths. The nine paths are called *nava vidhi bhakti*

marg, of which the fourth step is of service. It is said that service is the highway to reach God. Service is also communication. We need to look at the greater personages in history, whose life was dedicated to service - Mother Teresa, Swami Vivekananda, Lord Mahavir and presently Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who is service personified. Hence, service is *sadhana*, a spiritual endeavour and commitment.

“WHY DO YOU WANT US TO SERVE?”

A pertinent question arises now as to why Bhagawan wants us to serve? He says, “It is the only way to be egoless. It is the only way to consider the great quality of humility – to be humble, to want to serve. To be egoless one should enlist in the path of service.” When we serve, we cannot be egoistic. Then again, unless we are free from ego, we cannot serve to the best of our ability.

Once Swami wanted a tin of *laddus* to be distributed to the boys and He instructed me to fetch the tin of *laddus*. As Swami went inside, I called one of the boys and instructed him to bring the tin. Bhagawan noticed this and rebuked me saying, “I can ask those boys to bring it Myself, You don’t have to delegate powers to anybody. I wanted to give you this chance of service and you lost it. I gave you this chance of service and you missed it. And you may not get it again.”

What had happened? At that time I was Principal of the College and I felt it demeaning to carry the tin of *laddus*. The ego did not allow me to do this. But, the one who does it is egoless. So long as there is ego, we cannot be spiritual or religious and Realisation is out of the question. Indeed, we should say, “Oh, ego! Let me go!” The ego is the iron curtain between God and humans. So, service helps us to be humble and remove that iron curtain that separates us from Divine manifestation.

Furthermore, let us understand that we are not serving anybody. Rather, we are serving ourselves. Once in an interview, Swami asked some young people what work they were doing. When they replied that they were helping the aged, the physically challenged and the poor, Swami cut them short and told them – “You are not helping anybody. You are helping **yourselves**” Every act of service is an act to oneself, not to anybody else.

“DO YOU THINK YOU ARE SERVING ME?”

Once, a gentleman decided to feed an old *Brahmin* as an act of service. In his opinion a non-*Brahmin* would not be suitable to serve, so he wanted only to feed a Brahmin. After waiting the entire morning, around 1.30 p.m. an old *Brahmin* of 80-85 years came by. Immediately, this gentleman escorted him home. Food was served and the *Brahmin* started eating. But the gentleman was highly irritated because he suspected that that

person was not a *brahmin* – he had not washed his feet first nor had he said his prayers or sprinkled water around his plantain leaf.

Then he said to the *Brahmin*, “This food is not for you! Please leave.” Then, as usual, he ate and slept. In his sleep Bhagawan appeared in a dream and said, “Hey you! Are you a buffalo? I fed this old *Brahmin* for 85 years! He was eating comfortably twice a day. Yet you could not feed him even once, and you think you are serving Me? Do you think that food will reach Me? Stupid – you are stupid.” Straightway, the gentleman woke up and went in search of the old man but he never found him.

It is apparent that Bhagawan appeared in the form of that Brahmin to teach that person the lesson that he is not helping anybody. This present moment the opportunity is given to each one to help oneself by helping others. So, this is the realisation of “Service to the Spirit”.

SERVICE IS THE ONLY WAY FOR REALISATION

Service is the only way to realisation. The result and culmination of service is realisation. What is there to realise? With true service, one realises the omnipresence of God. It is the journey from “I” to “We”. As we travel along the path of service, we experience the all-encompassing cosmic nature of God who embodies the universe.

Bhagawan gave the example of Eknath who was once carrying a pot of River Ganga water to Rameshwaram. It was summer and on the way Eknath saw a donkey on the ground in agony, as it was very thirsty. Immediately Eknath fed some water to the donkey. The people around him ridiculed Eknath for this act, saying that he was to offer the sacred Ganga water to Lord Siva in Rameshwaram and now Eknath has foolishly offered it to the donkey. Eknath replied, “That same Siva is here right now in this donkey. This thirsty donkey is the very reflection and embodiment of Siva Himself. Therefore I offered this water to the donkey”.

That is the pinnacle of true realisation. God serves man and in turn man should serve his fellowmen.

Thank you for your time. More of Swami’s precious gems next time!

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