

Sathya Sai Seva

THE Vedhas are inspired by the holy spirit of Divine Mercy; they seek to transmit to humanity the secrets of a happy life here and of Liberation forever. They reveal the essence of the Divine Glory. They are the source of spiritual knowledge over the millennia for all mankind. The Vedhas and the Intellect, which man is endowed with as a gift from God to separate good from evil, are the means by which the culture of this land is to be preserved and promoted. When the Vedhic treasure house is explored with intelligence, the Aathma-thathwa (essential nature of the Self) becomes clear and when that is recognised, man becomes eternally happy and full of peace. This treasure was slighted and neglected as a result of the fascination for outlandish ways of life, but, since some years, the feeling of reverence and the readiness to repent have appeared among the people.

This Conference is itself a sign of revival. You are allotted the task of bringing once again to the homes of the people the message of Aathmic strength and Aathmic unity. Transmuting 'man' into 'God' and experiencing that Aanandha (Bliss) is the one and only achievement for which life is to be devoted. The efforts you make in your own places are directed to bring this goal into the awareness of each person. Of course, there are in existence many organisations and societies engaged in distributing various cures for the 'spiritual' 'ills of their constituents, and therefore, a question may arise about the need for this additional institution. The need has arisen to emphasise the basic and essential discipline, which is practical and universal, as prescribed since ages for the revelation of the Divine in man.

Bhaaratheeya Culture has to be fostered first

The entire Universe is pictured as but the Body of Vishnu, by the Vedhas. And, Bhaarith (India) is as the eye of the Universe, the reason being that she has the most correct vision of the Cosmos in the context of Time. The mother desires that the son should uphold the honour of the family; the son should uphold the fair name of the mother and father. So, every Indian has to learn and practise the spiritual science that the sages of this land have explored and discovered. However, due to hostile forces, evil company, ignorant fascination, Indians have neglected this foremost duty. The infection has come; it is well settled in the organism. Now, it has to be cast out. This Conference and the organisations you represent are attempts to cure that illness. The purpose is the same, whatever the name---Prashaanthi Vidwanmahaasabha, Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Sathya Sai Seva Dhal, or Sathya Sai Bhaktha Mandali.

The first aim is to foster and cultivate Bharatheeya Culture. Let its validity be examined through actual living, and one's own discovery of its values; and communicated to others by those who have experienced the peace and joy derivable from it. I do not want the extolling of the drug by persons who have not been themselves cured by it. Today, in the very land where this culture grew and flourished, immorality and corruption have destroyed happiness and contentment. Many condemn these things, but those are the very persons who commit the wrongs they deplore. Those who profess to lead the people are themselves led astray by the temptation to fall. So, the very first ideal you must keep in mind, when you start and run these organisations is: Do not crave for status or authority or position; do not allow any pomp, or show; do not compete for publicity or recognition or praise.

Unity Consciousness is the heart-beat of India

Duty is God. Do it and be content. You may have yearnings towards self-aggrandizement and plans to fulfil them; I know that some people have already devised plans for getting into official positions; but, you must subdue and destroy those desires. Following My instructions without demur, is the best plan. While engaged in Service (Sella), it is wrong to yield to lower cravings or to follow one's own impetuosity. The Vedhas declare that it is only by Thyaaga--- renunciation, surrender, submission---that immortality can be acquired.

In the history of India, you must have noticed that all the great movements and empires were motivated by spiritual undercurrents, not by political or economic stresses. It is only after the advent of the East India Company that politics and the struggle for political power predominated. You must make politics subserve the need to promote and perfect the fundamentals of Indian (Bhaaratheeya) culture.

The Universe is the Body of God; in the Body, the Unity Consciousness is Bhaarith, the Ekabhaava (feeling of Oneness). "Ekam Sath," (The Reality is One) the Vedhas declared aeons ago! That is the heart-beat of Bhaarith today. This is the reason why sages, saints, Divine personages and Incarnations of God appear here and proclaim their message to mankind from this land. The precious message is now being exported, but very little is used inside the country. That is the tragedy.

Sai organisations must promote faith in God

For the influence available from positions of authority, for acquiring and accumulating power, individuals talk ill of others and breed hate. From dawn till dusk and dusk till dawn, the chief occupation of people today is finding fault with others, trying to publicise the faults in others. This state of things is an insult cast in the face of our hoary culture. It springs from the craving for cheap popularity and temporary fame.

Your organisations must endeavour to promote faith in God. If that base is absent, worship, bhajan, puuja, good works---all become meaningless automatic ritual, done under social compulsion. Inner transformation, which is the fruit, can be acquired only when these are done with faith. Faith can grow only from the root of inquiry. Faith is made firmer by inquiry. You must encourage inquiry by the members whom you contact and welcome their efforts to gain first-hand experience.

Man strives to provide himself with food, clothing and housing for the sake of the body; he must also provide himself with some things to keep the mind healthy and happy. It is the mind that conditions even the body. The mind is the instrument, the fly-wheel, the thickest comrade of man. Through it, one can either ruin oneself or save oneself. Regulated and controlled, channelised properly, it can liberate; wayward and let loose, it can entangle, and bind fast. Try to find out when exactly man is having peace, full undisturbed peace. You will see that he is at peace only during sushupti (deep sleep). For, at that time, the senses are inactive, the mind is inert and unattached to the senses or their targets. So, when

senses are made ineffective to drag the mind out, man can attain peace. That is the real saadhana, the basic saadhana: the withdrawal of the senses from the objective world (Nivritthimaarga).

Two fangs that make the individual poisonous

Train the mind to dwell on the inner equipment rather than the outer attractions. Use the mind to cleanse the feelings, impulses, attitudes, tendencies and levels of consciousness. Let it not accumulate dirt from the outer world and deposit them within itself. If it is attached to work (Pravritthimaarga) the consequences of work get attached to it. Unattached work is the purest; it does not encumber the mind with elation or disappointment. 'I did it,' 'This is mine': these are the two fangs that make the individual poisonous. Pull out the fangs, the snake can be handled and played with as a pet. These organisations must be vigilant to see that egoism and the sense of personal possession, pride or achievement, do not invade them. That is the goal to be kept in view.

When an organisation is started it has to lay down for itself certain rules and regulations. But our rules are of a different nature altogether. Our rules emphasise that members must first practice what they stand for. Whatever you desire others to do, you must first put into daily practice sincerely and with steadfastness. You must do bhajan regularly and systematically, before you advise others about the efficacy of bhajans. When you want to be honoured by others, you must learn to honour them first.

Bhagawaan is the medicine for Bhava-rogha

Service has become a word of common currency, but its value is very much reduced by the hypocrisy of the users. Really speaking, only those who are afflicted with agony, equal agony, at the sight of pain and suffering, distress or disease, have the fight to offer service; for, they are not serving others, they are serving themselves, serving to remove as fast and as intelligently as they can, their own agony. Service to others is the medicine one needs to alleviate the distress which fills one at the sight of distress in another being. Feel that you are serving yourself, that you are curbing your own ego. Otherwise service heightens your self-esteem and develops a sense of superiority, which are both harmful spiritually.

Food is the medicine for the illness of hunger; drink, for the illness of thirst; for the disease of bhavarogha (Birth-Death-Cycle), Bhagawaan is the medicine; for the disease of desire, Jnaana is the specific. For the disease of doubt, despair and hesitation, which are the occupational diseases of Saadhakas, the most effective remedy is paropakaara (doing good to others). For the major infection of ashaanthi (anxiety), the course of treatment is bhajan. It is to provide these remedies to the sufferers that the organisation has to dedicate itself.

A spiritual organisation is really above all rules and regulations; the realm of the Aathma is beyond the limits of regulations. In this sense, rules are either meaningless or superfluous in Sathya Sai Organisations. But at least, to satisfy the law of the land dealing with associations of this kind, some rules have to be adopted. For example, who can be members of these organisations, and what are their qualifications? (1) Of course, they must be eager aspirants for spiritual progress. (2) They must have full faith in the Name that the organisation bears and in spreading that Name, in the manner suited to Its Message and Majesty. (3) Besides, the member must have won recognition as a good person. That is all

the qualification needed; nothing else counts. There is no need to have money or lands, or scholarship, influence or authority or official position.

Oath must be taken from the very depth of the heart

If you have the three qualifications mentioned, I assure you, even if you have no place in any organisation bearing My Name, you will have a place here (Baba indicated His Heart as the place where they will be accepted). The organisations must be such that members find them congenial places to deepen their Saadhana, to cultivate their virtues and to overcome their ego, by contact with workers who are free from the least trace of that deadly poison. If this is achieved, their success is certain.

Secondly, what are the duties of members and office-bearers? You know that the State requires you to take a solemn oath, when you take up an office or enter upon an assignment. Similarly, each member and office-bearer must take an oath, from the very depths of the heart, before engaging themselves in the activities. "Swaami, Save me from any act of commission or omission which will affect adversely the three qualifications You have laid down. Bless me with the skill, intelligence and enthusiasm necessary for the task I am dedicating myself to carry out for my own uplift. Guide me along the correct path; shower on me Your Grace so that I may earn a fair name in this attempt; guard me from temptation and wrong steps." When you rise from bed at dawn, pray thus. At night, when you go to bed, ponder over your activities during the day, examining them, whether you went against any of the conditions of membership, and if any wrong had been committed unconsciously, pray that it may not happen again. Decide to dedicate yourself in this manner, with these ideals for the work ahead.

Do not develop fanaticism in Sai activities

Another point I want to emphasise is this: There are many other organisations with spiritual objectives in this land, run under different names, attached to other Names and Forms of God, like Raama, Krishna. You know that Indian culture insists that you should offer reverence to all the names and forms of the One God-head. In your organisations, there may be some who insist that only Sai Bhajan should be sung, only the Name and Form of Sathya Sai be used. This is a great mistake. You are thereby dishonouring Sai. If you attach yourself to Sai and detach yourself from Krishna, you get a plus there and a minus here; the resultant gain is zero. In this matter do not develop fanaticism or sectarianism. Others may have these, but that is no reason why you should meet them with the same failings. Try your best to avoid such infection. When the other organisations require help, go and help them. This will make them realise the loving universal nature of your attitude.

Again, do not encourage differences based on region, language, religion, or any such flimsy grounds. For example, people who exaggerate these differences argue in Madras that only Tamil songs should be sung or in Andhra Pradesh, that only Telugu songs should be sung. If such ideas are entertained, they will undermine the Adhyaathmik (Spiritual) outlook, the attitude of unity and oneness which is the keynote of the spirit. This is a field where inner joy, inner satisfaction, internal purity are more important than outer expression.

I do not like collection of funds. But, since some expense has to be incurred, I have to allow it under very stringent conditions. Each organisation has as Members (of the Samithi) about ten or fifteen persons. Whatever expense they decide to incur for the work of the Samithi (Organisation), they have to collect among themselves, without seeking help from those outside the circle. They have, of course, to contribute according to their capacity and limit the work to the resources they can pool among themselves.

A word of warning on collecting funds and spending

Do not plan beyond your capacity and move about with lists from person to person to get funds. By this, the institution gets a bad name and you too will not be spared. You may say, "But, when Swami comes to our place, we must spend a lot on reception arrangements." No, I do not need grand decorations, huge pandals, arches, flags and such paraphernalia. I require only a mike to communicate My advice to the people. Even a chair is superfluous! I can talk standing. Spend sparingly for the minimum needs; do not involve yourselves in expensive luxury. I would like you to spend any extra money that you have for the feeding of the poor or for any similar beneficial object.

Attempts are being made in many places to build Sathya Sai Mandhirs (halls of worship). But Sathya Sai will be happy if He is installed in your hearts; that is the Mandhir I like, not those. When you seek to build that other Mandir, you have to go about seeking donations. Religion has declined in this land due to this donation-seeking and donation-granting. Really speaking, the most precious donation is a pure mind; give that to the organisation and it will shine.

I shall tell you a method by which the extra funds you may need for any undertaking the Samithi has in view are to be collected. Estimate beforehand what the expense will be. Suppose it comes to a thousand rupees, give that information to the fifteen members, and fix a day when they shall all meet. That day, keep a locked box with a slit on the lid, in an inner room; let every one go in alone into the room and deposit in the box whatever he feels he can. He can come away without depositing anything; he has the freedom to do so, there is no compulsion.

If funds are collected with the knowledge of the rest, a person who is unable to give as much as another may feel humiliated and so this is the best method. When all have finished their turn, let the box be opened and the amount counted. If it falls short of the estimate, divide the shortfall among all members equally and collect the share from each. If there is some surplus, keep it for the next occasion.

Fund collection campaign will lead to calumny

Do not have lists, appeals, receipt books and all the cumbrous complex of fund collection campaigns. That way will lead you to stratagems and falsehoods, competition and calumny. Do it in this quiet and sacred manner, suited to the holy objectives you have.

Some delegates suggested that sub-committees be formed and recognised. But that will increase the number and so give room for more mistakes. Let the responsibility be on a few dedicated persons. The District President must see that small associations in the villages are given proper guidance and help to

carry out the task undertaken by them, and to send to those villages, exponents of Vedic culture in order to instruct and inspire them. Attempts should also be made to spread spiritual knowledge and instill the yearning for spiritual Saadhana among students and youth.

Do not set limits to celebrations of holy days

Sathya Sai Seva Samithis have to bear in mind the word, Seva, and take up Seva work enthusiastically. Seva must be directed towards the removal of physical distress, the alleviation of mental agony, and the fulfilment of spiritual yearning. Some regions are affected by floods, some by drought; the Samithi must make efforts to bring relief to the sufferers from these and other natural calamities.

The Bhajan Mandalis, Sathsangs, Bhaktha Mandalis, that are now established must spread the message of Naamasmarana, Bhajana and Naamasankeerthana at all times and in all places. Jayadeva, Gouranga, Thyaagaraaja--all these moved through the bazaars and streets, singing bhajans and songs about the glory of God and their ecstasy filled lakhs and lakhs of people with Divine fervour.

Yesterday, someone read out a list of Holy Days which the associations were to celebrate. That list mentioned Shivaraathri, Navaraathri, Swaami's Birthday and Guru Pournami. But you must also celebrate the Birthdays of the Mahaathmas who led man to the God within him, and also all days held holy by your brothers. Do not set limits to these celebrations and these days. Make every day a Holy Day and fill it with the recollection of God and His Messengers.

Establish unity among yourselves first; do not seek faults in others or excellences in your own selves. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man--have full faith in this and fill every act of yours with that reverence and love. Meet together once a week or once a fortnight or at least once a month; have someone to discourse to you, or engage in bhajan or study or dhyana; experience the thrill of spiritual comradeship. Every member of the association must have some item of work allotted to him and he must be present whenever such meetings are held, unless of course it becomes physically difficult.

I must tell you about another point also. Wherever you are, whatever work you do, do it as an act of worship, an act of dedication, an act for the glorification of God who is the inspirer, the witness, the Master. Do not divide your activities as, "These are for my sake" and "These are for the sake of God." Even if you divide zero by zero, you get one.

When you work, there should be no remainder, nothing should remain over. See all work as one. You should not, the Shaasthras say, leave any remainder or balance in debts, in disease, in vengeance against enemies, in the cycle of birth-death. Finish all, down to the last. They should not recur again. If you offer all activities at the feet of the Lord and free them from any trace of egoistic attachment, the consequence will not bind you: you are free, you are liberated, you have Moksha.

First All-India Conference of Bhagawan Shri Sathya Sai

Seva Organisations, Madras, 21-4-1967