

Death: a welcome voyage

This Conference of Office-bearers of Sathya Sai Organisations in Andhra Pradesh is meeting not in the capital city of the State, while similar Conferences of other States were held in the capitals of those States, like Bombay and Madras. You have the privilege of meeting in the Prashaanthi Nilayam itself. This must remind you that the task you have taken upon yourselves is to transform your own villages into Prashaanthi Nilayams, after transforming your own hearts into Prashaanthi Nilayams.

This is the message of Sanaathana Dharma (Eternal Religion), the goal to which all spiritual endeavour leads. The sages of India gave up the paths of superficial pomp and temporary security; they sought to gain inner peace and lasting joy. They discovered that these can be gained only by drawing the sap of life through the roots of one's own inner reality called Athma (soul). Though this lesson that was revealed to them by God- is repeated, elaborated and propagated all these centuries by countless scholars, poets and speakers, very few accept it as the basis of life.

Millions all over the land recite the Name of God, but few have steady faith; few seek the Aanandha (bliss) that contemplation on the Glory of God within the Atma can confer. They do so out of habit or for social conformity or to gain reputation for religiousness. Therefore the japam (recitation) does not cure pain, grief or greed.

Man is not conscious of Death, his companion

The Pandiths, who have learnt the ancient texts containing Atma-vidhya (Science of the Self), do not put into practice what they repeat orally; they have no faith in the assertions made in the Vedas. The canker of doubt has undermined their reverential attitude to the Vedas; they do not ensure the continuance of Vedic studies, by initiating their sons into the Vedas. They devalue the Vedas into rupee-earning devices, and when they do not get money through them, they are disappointed; they envy those who follow secular avocations. But, if they only develop faith, the Veda itself will foster them and ensure for them a happy contented life.

The insect on the wing is snapped up by the frog's leaping tongue; the frog is caught unawares by the jaws of the snake; the snake is killed by the peacock; the peacock is killed by the hunter. One living thing is food for another; death lies in wait at every turn of day and night. Man is stalked ceaselessly by death; it may pounce any moment on its prey. He is not conscious of this companion; he has not learned how to meet him and rob him of the fruits of his exploit. The Atma does not die; only the body dies. When man knows this, death loses his sting, death is not feared, death is but welcome voyage into the known harbour.

Dhasharatha was so enamoured of his young queen, Kaikeyi, that he promised to grant her two boons, whatever they may be, whenever she desired! This was foolish; who can say what she will ask for, and when? It placed the Emperor Dhasharatha fully at the mercy of her whim. And what a monstrous whim she had! The very moment Raama was to be installed on the throne as Prince Regent, she put forth her two demands: "Rama must be banished into the forest for as long as fourteen years! Her son, Bharatha, should be crowned Prince Regent, instead." He had to agree. The pang of separation from his dearly beloved son killed him when Raama left.

Service should not seek any reward

Pre-occupation with happiness derived from external objects and from others---this caused Dhasharatha's death. All men are Dhasharathas. They are enamoured of happiness derived from outside themselves, they are immersed in sensual, objective pursuits, and they reap the reward of grief and death.

The Organisations named after Me are not to be used for publicising My Name, or creating a new cult around My worship. They must try to spread interest in japam (recitation of God's Name), dhyaanam (meditation) and other saadhanas (spiritual practices), which lead man Godward; they must demonstrate the joy derivable from bhajan (devotional group singing) and Naamasmarana (remembering God's Name), the Shaanthi (peace) that one can draw from Sathsang (good company). They must render seva (service) to the helpless, the sick, the distressed, the illiterate and the needy. Their seva (selfless service) should not be exhibitionistic; it must seek no reward, not even gratitude or thanks from the recipients. Seva is saadhana, not a pastime of the rich and well placed. Each one must realise his own truth. That is the purpose of all the teaching, all the curing, all the counseling, all the organising, all the advising that I do.

The blood in the body is the same in all the limbs. But the eye has function, which it alone can execute. The ear has another. Salt, which the tongue will welcome, hurt when it is put in the eye. This is the basis of the Varna-ashrama organisation, the specific allotment of duties and obligations as befits inherited skills and aptitudes, as well as the prescription of duties and obligations (Varna), in accordance with the progress in age and spiritual accomplishment (ashrama). In order to regulate conduct and limit emotions and passions, and ensure contentment and peace, such institutions are necessary; but, they must be permeated with love and mutual respect. Develop Love, scatter Love, reap Love. There is no religion higher than that. That is the noblest seva.

Be true, be polite, be strong in your convictions

Do not start a Sathya Sai Organisation to please someone, or under the compulsion of others. Since only office-bearers are invited to attend the World Conference at Bombay in May next, let not any one start any unit now, making himself an office-bearer, so that he can attend that conference. Units must be started only when there is a felt need, a yearning among the people. Do not become the target of ridicule, organising a bhajana mandali, and yourself not participating in the bhajan. If you genuinely feel that bhajan is of all activities the most beneficial, start a mandali (centre); otherwise, leave things alone.

You and I have now come together; with the devotees from your villages, make a garland of sadhana for Me. I have no special attachment to any one; nor, any special aversion. I am like the electric fan that you see here: switch it on, you get the breeze; switch it off, you get no breeze. The fan has no attachment or aversion. Do not say one thing before others and another thing behind them; that is bad for an organiser. Be fair, be true, be polite, be strong in your convictions. Then you have My Blessings in all that you undertake.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 23-2-1968