Lecture: 11



## MEANING

Selfless service or Seva in Sanskrit is a service which is performed without any expectation of result or award for performing it. Such services can be performed to benefit other human beings or society.

Being selfless is always willing to give to others without looking for personal gain, if you give time, money, or things to other people without expecting something in return, that is selfless attitude. Most people agree that the world would be a far better place if there were more selfless behaviour.

The value of selfless service is found in many religions and spiritual traditions around the world. Indian religions refer to selfless service which is thought to advance a person's spiritual growth or development. "Seva" is a Sanskrit word which means service or work performed without any thought of reward or repayment. In ancient India seva was believed to help one's spiritual growth and at the same time contribute to the improvement of a community.

So, is it really possible for an ordinary person to serve others without expecting reward or recognition, or does one need to be a saint to engage in such service? According to wellness expert Daniel Scott, the answer is that we all have the capacity for selfless service.

Through selfless service of the poor and needy and charity one can :

Develop the heart and cleanse the mind.

Purify the heart and make it a fit abode for God.

Fill the heart with divine virtues.

Attain the vision of God.

Research indicates numerous benefits to those who engage in selfless service, including reduction of emotional disturbance, greater longevity, stress reduction, improved morale, increased self-confidence and self-esteem, better health, pain reduction, and greater overall happiness.

According to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the joy of giving is far more rewarding than the joy of getting, and can be compared to a thrill or high. Service is sacrifice and sacrifice is an act of giving out, which will cost you something.

## TYPES, KINDS OF SELFLESS SERVICE

Physical: Service through sharing the physical strength of the body –
Sharing body or physical abilities for the benefit of the needy.

Financial: Sharing acquired wealth and resources for humanitarian activities.

Donations and charity for human welfare, healthcare, community development, disaster management etc.

Intellectual: Expression of inner maturity creating awareness, Serving intellectual needs, sharing knowledge, educating public, Creating awareness of internal peace.

"Engage yourselves in service activity. Consider social service as service to God. This is the best way to earn God's Love. Love all and serve all. Your entire life will be sanctified thereby."

— Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Baba suggests a pure heart, charity, love, selflessness, and a passionate attitude as prerequisites for seva: Phyllis Krystal a devotee of Sathya

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Human Values and Ethics Sal Baba writes in 'Taming Our Monkey Mind', service whether to family members or others, should be undertaken for the right reasons and not with any ulterior motives in mind, for that would curtail its effectiveness. To be free from ego it should flow out of deep compassion for the pain, hunger, feelings of rejection, loss, or any other problem from which either an individual or a group is suffering. Only then will it benefit the one who serves as well as those receiving the services.

Therefore, one should not take up any particular service with an intention to gain recognition, feel important or worthwhile or any other reward from the beneficiaries, or for any kind of personal gain.

Let's take a look at some great leaders starting with Nelson Mandela. He was a selfless leader who lived his life for his people and environment, yet he became one of the greatest leader who ever lived. During his life and after his death he was celebrated as a hero. Mandela hás become a household name all over the world.

Mahatma Gandhi was another selfless leader recognised throughout the world, who carried the pains and interest of his people above himself and he also became great during his life time.

Mother Theresa was another woman who rendered a selfless service and the Lord blessed her in all her endeavours.

Wangari Maathai, a great female environmentalist, political activist and conservationist from Kenya is one more example of a selfless leader who had so much love for her people and environment. She dedicated her life time to political activism and environmental issues in her country and was greatly honoured.

Baba Amte was an Indian social worker and social activist. He was from a rich family and a renowned lawyer and was successfully practicing law. But he later chose to undertake selfless service of the society. He is known particularly for his work for rehabilitation and empowerment of people suffering from leprosy. He started an organization for the leprosy patients known as Anandwan.

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others - Mahatma Gandhi

## Selfless Service explained by H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda

- God's plan for man's evolution is work. Love of God and service of man is the secret
  of true life. The meaning of true life is service and sacrifice. Life is meant for service,
  and not for self-seeking Sacrifice! Do your duties well, sincerely. Your privileges will
  follow unasked.
- Hold your life for the service of others. The more the energy you spend in elevating and serving others, the more the divine energy which will flow to you.
- Serve. You will rule. Serve humanity with divine Bhava. The cancer of individuality will be dissolved.
- Selfless Service Purifies. What is the object in Seva or service? Why do you serve poor people and the suffering humanity at large? Why do you serve the society and the country? By doing service, you purify your heart. Egoism, hatred, jealousy, idea of superiority vanishes. Humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance, and mercy are developed. Sense of separateness is annihilated. Selfishness is eradicated. You get a broad outlook of life. You begin to feel oneness or unity of life. You develop a broad heart with broad, generous views. Eventually, you get Knowledge of the Self. You realise the 'One-in- all' and 'all-in-One'. You feel unbounded joy.
- The first step in the spiritual path is selfless service of humanity. Selfless service is the watchword along the road to salvation. Selfless service of humanity prepares the aspirant for the attainment of cosmic consciousness, or the life of oneness or unity with God. Aspirants should direct their whole attention in the beginning towards removal of selfishness by protracted selfless service.
- Through selfless service and charity, develop the heart and cleanse the lower mind. Purify your heart by selfless and humble service of the poor and the afflicted, and make it a fit abode for God to dwell. Selfless service alone can purify your heart and fill it with divine virtues. Only the pure in heart will have the vision of God.
- Grow in love, purity, and self-sacrifice. Live for others. You will attain the state of blessedness. Selfless service and cosmic love are the Ganga and the Yamuna that irrigate the field of the human heart and enable the rich harvest of peace, joy, prosperity, immortality, and Atma-jnana to be reaped.
- Opportunities for Selfless Service. The world is yourself. Therefore, love all, serve all, be kind to all, embrace all. Behold the Lord in the poor, the down-trodden; the oppressed and lowly ones.

- Become a servant of humanity. This is the secret of attaining God-realisation. Seek out
  the lowly and the miserable; cheer up and bring a ray of comfort to them by serving
  them unstintingly. Console the disconsolate. Comfort the distressed. You will be
  blessed.
- Serve your parents, elders, teachers, and guests with divine Bhava. Wash the clothes of your parents, elders, the sick, and the Mahatmas.
- Feed the hungry, nurse the sick, comfort the afflicted, and lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful. God will bless you. Clothe the naked. Educate the illiterate. Feed the poor. Raise the down-trodden. The world is burning with misery and suffering. Wake up, 0 man! Serve! Serve with love. Serve untiringly. Attain the peace of the Eternal.
- Have a knowledge of homoeopathy or Dr. Schussler's Twelve Tissue Remedies. Now serve the sick and the needy. And with first-aid knowledge, always give first help in all cases of emergency. Get medicine from the hospital or the dispensary for the helpless and deserving neighbours. Visit a hospital daily, if you can, or weekly, and give your best attention to the non-paying wards. Distribute oranges, if you can. Sit' by the side of the patient and speak a few encouraging words. Smile awhile. Repeat, if you can, the Sahasranama of the Lord or the like. Tell him that you will meet him 'tomorrow'; and meet him.
- Collect some old clothes and distribute them to the needy. Distribute a few pies to the lame, the blind, and to the hungry mouths as you walk alongthe street. Serve any social institution for one hour daily without any remuneration.
- Meet your friends and the members of your society in a common place once a week or a fortnight for Satsanga and Kirtana. Develop an understanding heart. Help your younger brothers in the spiritual path. Lift them up. Throw light on their path; Do not expect perfection from them. Be kind to them. They are doing their best, as you are yourself doing yours. You will grow by helping them.
- Finally, think for yourself, how best you can utilise your energy, your intellect, your education, your wealth, your strength, or anything you possess, for the betterment of others who are low-placed in life, and for society in general.