

SAI PEARLS OF WISDOM

PART 30 - D

THE LEADER

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh.

The purpose of the Avatar is to set an example to all of us in every aspect of life and in every sphere of human activity. Like this we can learn many, many things from the life of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. For instance, I would like to talk to you (about) a few of the observations I made on His leadership.

One day it so happened, the MBA students sat in the front row and they were holding some project work on hand. That work is ready with them (in) spiral-bound copies. Well I have come to know that they did a project on leadership program.

Well, Swami came to them and blessed them and asked them, "What is the subject?"

And student said, "Swami! This is the project on the leadership."

Swami's response was this, "When you see the leader here, why do you worry? You can learn many things." said Swami.

What a profound statement it is. We can understand thereby that we find all the leadership qualities in Bhagavan Baba Himself. We can learn and emulate His example. That is the purpose of Avatar.

I also remember on one of the Sri Rama Navami celebration Swami said, "Sri Rama Navami celebration is not mere festivity and gaiety, making delicious items at home and wearing new clothes. It's not the be-all and end-all. You should emulate the qualities of Lord Sri Ramachandra as He stood for truth, as He followed scrupulously the command of the father. Well, how he observed all the principles of administration. There are several aspects. So following the life of Ramachandra is the true form of celebration of Sri Rama Navami."

Like this a true devotee of Baba should follow His example, should learn from Him. That is true worship; not simply do it as a ritual and get our desires fulfilled. It is something more. It is in this connection, let me share with you some of the leadership qualities of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The first and the foremost quality of Bhagavan Baba as a leader is this: He showers equal love on everybody, let him be a member or the president, right from a worker to the boss. He showers same love, let he be the student or the vice chancellor. There is no question of difference or any kind of distinction or differentiation, nothing

whatsoever. He showers same love on everybody. This is the quality that every leader is supposed to have.

And the second: Swami's planning, Swami's planning is excellent. Supposing when he wants to go to Kodaikanal, He starts planning from January itself. Usually He goes there in May, but the preparation starts in the month of January itself. And when He thinks of Dasara celebrations, well He will be thinking of the celebrations well in advance. Of course, this nobody will come to know. He plans ahead so that there will be no confusion at any point of time. This is the quality of a true leader

And third, Bhagavan is an ideal leader in the sense that he will identify the talents among people and encourage them to proceed and improve in the direction. Take for example, students: if there are some students who are singers, He blesses them with number of opportunities so that they would become very good singers later.

If there is any student interested in public speaking, He will give them many chances so that he would become an eloquent speaker later. Therefore, a true leader should be able to identify the talents, the abilities, and the capacities of the people working under him or working with him, and encourage them to proceed in that particular area.

And then another quality of Bhagavan leadership is this. He comes well in advance. If there is a public meeting, He will come there onto the dais well in advance and see where the tables are kept, how many chairs are kept, how is the decoration, who is in charge of that, who is the person introducing the guests, who will be proposing vote of thanks. He will check every minute detail, and then Swami returns, and arrives at the right time.

In other words, a true leader should check and re-check and ensure that everything is perfect, rather blaming anybody, rather taking a chance, nothing like that. He checks and goes into every minute detail. This is the quality of a leader. That's what I observed in Bhagavan.

And ideal leadership quality in Bhagavan is this: At the end of the conference, national or international, He goes on speaking very high of the leaders of the organization. He praises them to skies - they labored hard, they spent all their time and they spared no effort in bringing this conference to a grand thumping success. He praises them for all their efforts. And even at the time of sports meet, He will speak in praise of students and staff.

But the secret all of us know (is) He does it and gives us the credit. He really brings all experts to train students here; that we know. He makes all the arrangements for all conferences here for over a period of one month at least, while the leaders arrive 2 or 3 days in advance. He does everything and gives the credit to the leaders, to the followers, to those who are in charge of different activities, though in reality He does it single-handed.

This is the quality of a leader. In other words, He has to project his members, rather projecting Himself. That is not happening today. The leader projects himself and he makes others do, and grabs the credit. But that is not the case with Bhagavan

Baba. These are the leadership qualities we have to learn. There is no fun of simply praising or doing *bhajan*. What is it that we are learning from Him? These are the things which really surprise me whenever I think of leadership qualities of Bhagavan Baba.

And the next, Bhagavan's quality of leadership is this. He will never discourage anybody. He always encourages them. Supposing a student was...I mean, is an utter flop in speaking that morning. A student may speak in the morning for instance and it is utter failure, in public, you know. But what is Swami's comment? He will never admonish him. He will say to all people there, "He spoke from his heart. Words have not come out of his lips, (but) I know his heart."

In other words, he will never say anything to discourage him. Later He will call him, encourage him, give him certain hints, certain suggestions, some advices and then gives him number of opportunities to improve himself. This is the quality of a leader. This is the quality of a leader.

And then another leadership quality of Bhagavan in this: If there is anything wrong with any one of us, He will call you aside, and then will give you left and right, and see that you correct yourself, you reform yourself and come up to His expectations. He will call you separately. But, if anything good in you, He will praise in front of everybody. This is the quality of a leader. A leader should be prepared to appreciate, appreciate everything that is good in his followers and then condemn them privately to correct them and thus rectify their mistakes or their defects. That is the quality of an ideal leader.

Then the next quality ideal leadership I observed in Swami is this: He will give an opportunity to everybody to express their opinion – "What do you say about it? What do you feel about it? What is your suggestion?" He will give patient listening to every member, and then He takes a decision at the end. His decision is final. This is the quality of a leader. He should allow everybody to speak out, so that everybody will have satisfaction of having expressed their own opinion on each and every matter. Therefore, the leader should be prepared to listen first. That is lacking today. We find people go on dictating. But it is not that. Swami's approach is altogether different.

The next leadership quality of Bhagavan is this: He sets Himself as the best example, best example of an ideal leader. How He may say (do) that? Supposing there is Narayana seva or distribution of food. He first goes there, starts serving those people. He will serve people at least for 1 or 2 or 3 rows. He starts. Or if it is clothes distribution, He starts distributing clothes. Meaning He serves and makes others follow Him. So, an ideal leader should be ideal, should follow what he says first and then, so that others would follow him next. This is a quality of an ideal leader.

Then Bhagavan leadership quality, I tell you, He is ready to give and forgive. He is ready to give anything, whatever you want, come on ask. Baba says this, "Don't beg, come to Me, ask. I will give whatever you want. Don't beg. You are not a beggar. I want to see you as a bigger but you are behaving as a beggar." That's what Swamis says. He gives endlessly, infinitely and forgives. If there are any

lapses, failures on our part, He forgives. If we say, “Swami, kindly pardon me...” (Swami says,)“No, no, that is over. Past is past, don’t repeat it. You are a good boy.” That is what Swami will say. So an ideal leader should be in a position to give and forgive.

Sometimes we may be surprised, why Swami is encouraging this fellow? This fellow has got so many defects in him. Why Swami is encouraging him? That is the doubt we have. But Swami is an ideal leader. As an ideal leader what does He do? He will look at your merits and make use of you for His mission, and He will point out to you your faults and mistakes individually, and help you to improve yourself.

Therefore, Bhagavan always says, “One has to be judged by the merits and not by the faults.” He gives an example: when you correct a paper, you give marks for the correct answers. You don’t think of the wrong answers provided there. So, likewise one has to be judged by their merits, not by their faults. That's what Bhagavan says.

And as a leader we can say that Swami, His way of presentation, as a presentation. What do I mean by way of presentation? He has got a different standard, different standard in everything He does. While speaking, Swami’s method of presentation is altogether different. It caters to the requirements and to different aspects of life - political, religious, financial, national, all aspects. So that presentation of Swami is so sweet, such that it satisfies every listener, every listener. That is the quality of an ideal leader. Ideal leader is not given for chosen few. He is meant for everybody.

Like this many more qualities are there that we'll discuss in the days to come.

Sai Ram