

Guidelines for the Aspiring *Loksevi*

– *a Social Worker on a Grander Scale*

Translated from the Hindi Book
Lokseviyo Ke Liye Disha Bodh
by

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Loksevi

The literal meaning of "loksevi" is one who serves the world—from "loka" (world) and "seva" (wholehearted, sincere social service). A social worker on a grander scale, the true loksevi holds the welfare of the community as his greatest mission in life. He does not simply work for the public, but serves it, lives for it, and does everything in his power so that it may enjoy a peaceful and moral lifestyle. This book was written not for those with a casual interest in service, but for those who are willing to devote their lives to it in entirety.



Introduction

Pujya Gurudev has written a great deal about the characteristics and habits of an ideal *loksevi*. Most of his writings on the subject have been published in the *Akhand Jyoti* column “*Apno Se Apni Baat*.” These articles are intended to help guide volunteers as Gurudev had intended.

Upon request from many active volunteers, these articles have been presented here in this booklet. It is hoped that this book will help workers mold their lives in accordance with Gurudev's ideals, which will enable them to be successful in their service endeavors.

Today, due to corruption and self-serving attitudes among *loksevi*, selfish success sometimes takes priority over society's welfare. At times like these, Gurudev's thoughts can work as pillars of support for the workers, helping them on the path of spiritual discipline. This will enable them to work with cooperation and compassion. These guidelines are applicable for any organization involved in social work.

Pujya Gurudev always wanted the *loksevi* to think positively. He has explained that applying these precepts to their daily lives will help them achieve self-satisfaction, respect from society, and divine blessings. By following his guidelines, *loksevi* can achieve eminence and greatly contribute to the building of nations and the restructuring of this era.

Seven Essential Vows for Pragya Parijans

Pujya Gurudev used his ashram Shantikunj as a means of inspiring personality development in his volunteers, which he believed would make the mission's activities more dynamic and effective. For this purpose, he issued these directions.

Pragya Parijans must shoulder the dual responsibility for themselves as well as society. They must give special attention to making their personalities more impressive and organized, which will require continuous effort in order to enhance certain skills. Every *parijan* must understand and practice the following points.

1. Aspiration and thinking

Life is the most precious of God's gifts. Aim to use every minute of it in nurturing this garden which is the world. This will benefit both the individual and society.

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Abandon worldly ambitions and aim instead to achieve true greatness. Make every effort to break free of lust, greed, and attachment. Intentions must be noble, and efforts to achieve goals honest. Enjoy the present. Do not look back. Pay close attention to the present; keep the future in mind.

Think like a scholar (a *gyan yogi*), make efforts wholeheartedly and full of energy like an achiever (a *karm yogi*), and be kind like a devotee (a *bhakti yogi*). Focus on eliminating destructive influences.

Treat the morning as the beginning of a new life, and night as the end of life. When planning for the day, plan as though there will be no tomorrow and make a promise to use every opportunity wisely. Make a commitment to participate wholeheartedly in mission activities. It is essential to perform the *Sun meditation* every morning, and at least three *mala* of the *Gayatri Mantra jap* every day, without missing any.

2. Diligence

Time is life. Keep this in mind, and spend every minute of it in meaningful and constructive activities. Laziness and negligence should be treated as one's worst enemies and should be cautiously avoided. Take responsibility for all habits, whether good or bad. Be introspective, examine your efforts to make sure they are not laid-back or indifferent. Proper planning, hard work, and sincere effort are the only ways to succeed in any endeavor.

No task should be considered inferior. It should be a matter of pride to complete it in time, applying all available resources and skills, whatever the assignment may be. When there is spare time do not wait for others to assign a task. There is plenty of work waiting to be completed, it could be as simple as restoring order in own or nearby

surroundings or something that seems quite trivial. The only measure of progress is the amount of initiative and enthusiasm applied to a task.

3. Orderly living

Become a lover of beauty. Cleanliness, simplicity, and good thoughts make something beautiful. Be attentive to the surroundings and maintain cleanliness and order in every aspect of life, in body and clothing and in the living and work areas.

In addition to keeping personal workspaces clean, encourage and help colleagues to do the same. The importance of cleanliness should be explained in a friendly way: do not sound critical or sarcastic, as this might create bitterness. Keeping that in mind, attempt to get everyone involved in creating organized surroundings

The maxim of “early to bed and early to rise” should be followed, and journal-writing should be a part of the daily routine. This must be done in order to keep an account of every day's activities, in order to identify areas in need of improvement and attempt to rectify them. Daily routine must be carefully and regularly analyzed, and constant efforts should be made to improve it.

Remember that the one who has an organized mind plans carefully, considers every aspect, brings about change, and helps gather resources and support. Only such a mind can help earn status, respect, and success in society.

4. Courtesy

Courtesy is respect for others that is expressed by humility in speech and behavior. This virtue must be integrated into one's nature.

Restraint in speech and behavior must be practiced. If it is not, there will be a degradation of positive qualities and painful situations will result. There must be a thorough introspection, and if one is afflicted with this problem, it must be indentified and annihilated with a strong resolve. If such a neglect occurs out of habit, every attempt should be made to rectify it immediately.

The courtesies of meeting and parting should always be remembered. Keep a cheerful, smiling face, and do not show tiredness or disappointment. Become an active listener and a restrained speaker. Do not boast of personal accomplishments, and use “we” rather than “I”. Do not engage in flattery; and be careful to never sound excited, frustrated, or harsh. Always speak politely and use civil language. There are ways to express disappointment without creating an embarrassing situation. Do not jump to conclusions, but try to analyze the facts of both sides before making any decision.

A moral code of conduct must be kept in mind while performing civic duties. Avoid conversation that criticizes, taunts, or slanders anyone. When an opinion is needed, offer suggestions in a cordial tone, without passing judgment, and by highlighting both the pros and cons of the argument.

5. Self-restraint

The value of hard work, thoughts, money, and talent must be understood, and efforts should be made to use them in a constructive manner. Do not waste even a single bit of this precious wealth, as extravagance will only ruin the possibility of a bright future.

Control the senses; do not become tempted by delicious food or amorous thoughts. Make a daily schedule and follow it religiously. Avoid laziness but not hard work, and develop the habit of self-study so that the mind is engaged in finding ways for self-refinement. An evil thought can easily be countered by a good thought, so be generous with positive thoughts. Be prudent in spending, save a little, and do not get into the habit of borrowing. Utilize talents and reputation in society to reduce bad feelings and encourage positive thinking among others. Follow the principle of “simple living and high thinking” and avoid extravagance and luxuries, as they tend to become the reason for not only one's own, but the followers' downfall as well.

Identify any thought of ill-will and eliminate it with strong resolve. Practicing discipline, enduring, and adapting to unfavorable conditions is called *tapa*, or penance. This self-discipline is what makes a man powerful in the true sense.

6. Generous affection

A reserved manner is appropriate for the practice of self-refinement, but one should not attempt to become isolated. Mingle with others, work as a team, and make sure that everyone gets his reward. Consider the self to be a unit of society, and acknowledge that its growth is tied to that of society. Do not be self-centered. Maintain a family-oriented perspective in all thoughts and actions.

Realize the power of the collective and encourage united rather than individual effort. Mutual cooperation is very important, but it must be directed towards a noble cause. Avoid organizations which are involved in bad practices.

Expand the horizons of love and affection and do not merely save them for a select group of people. Use talents and abilities to instill positive thoughts in society; loving the entire society, culture, and country. Extend the boundaries of love to consider everyone part of one's family and oneself as part of their family. The feeling of affection, in practical life, is enhanced by engaging in selfless service. Be generous with it and receive the reward of contentment, social respect, and divine blessings.

7. Courage and fearlessness

Adopt foresight and discernment, and make decisions in life based on these. Accept from traditional thinking only that which makes sense. Aim for social betterment, but do not be confined to social norms. Public sentiment may be undesirable; it need not be followed. Use rational judgment in every circumstance and be brave enough to face people who may not agree. Believe in the principle of “one eye to shower love and the other to bring discipline.” Support the truth and disagree with what is inappropriate, and be ready to oppose it if needed. Even friends must not receive cooperation if they are engaged in some sort of wrongdoing.

There are many evil traditions and immoral thoughts rampant in today's society. Each must be treated with its own remedy. If this requires moral, social, and intellectual revolution, then be ready for it, and leave nothing undone to achieve it. Behave as an ascetic for self-refinement, a thinker for betterment, and a leader for bringing about positive change in society. Do not remain a silent observer in a time of injustice. Enrich the quality of courage, and become truly fearless in uprooting immorality and fostering excellence.

Some ground rules for public interaction

Pragya Parijans willing to step into the field of social service are advised to follow certain rules. The qualities of a *loksevi* are always valued more than his work. His character outweighs the actual effort to popularize the *Pragya Mission* and attract more people. Character is the first requirement for becoming a volunteer of the *Pragya Mission*.

Here are a few of the rules:

- Give up desire for delicious food. Never express preference for a particular dish.
- Do not speak with a member of the opposite sex in private. If there is anything to be said, express it with humility.
- Be transparent in financial dealings. Issue receipts for amounts received and record all expenditures.
- Pay special attention when interacting with others, and endeavor to be polite and respectful.
- Keep attire simple. Follow a simple, non-provocative dress code.

These rules will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.



Be Cautious of the Ego

In addition to motivating loksevi to observe the seven essential vows, Pujya Gurudev circulated two articles. One gives instructions on how to stay away from fatal attractions on the path to service, the other on ways to develop an attitude of humility. The articles are presented here.

According to legend, the churning of the ocean produced fourteen jewels. The first two were poison and wine. The poison appeared as an irresistible blue beverage, and the wine also seemed enticing. Both the gods and the demons were desperate for these, and did not listen to Lord *Brahma's* warning about their dangers. *Lord Shiva* held the poison in his throat, but he could not save the demons from the wine. They consumed it, and as a result their minds strayed and ultimately caused their downfall.

People have many feelings about a person entering the field of *seva* (wholehearted, sincere social service). It is considered an act of bravery. The loksevi receives affection and praise and is treated

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with great respect. Praise is also a kind of jewel. Any treasure has its usefulness, but it also has a potential for destruction if not used wisely. Wealth, if not used properly, leads to immoral habits. Brainpower, if not channeled properly, makes one deceitful. Power, if not kept in check, results in bullying. Even nectar, if not digested properly, can become poison. Similarly, fame and praise, if not taken correctly, become arrogance, which can severely corrupt the thoughts, actions, and behavior of a person. It is unfortunate to see so many loksevi succumbing to this disease of arrogance. It makes one wonder why such people chose this path in the first place; they would have done society and themselves a great favor had they decided otherwise.

There are three kinds of malicious attitudes which are the worst enemies of mankind: lust, discontent, and egotism. People who are confined to the worldly acts of eating, sleeping, and having children actually live a life that is no more than an animal's. But egotism and arrogance are worse. If given free rein, they will become the controlling authority in a person's life and will resist any interference. In many crimes, it may seem as if the motivation is greed, but it is often arrogance that makes a person engage in criminal activities. Crimes committed at the governing level are also often due to clashes of ego. History tells us that the motivation behind many wars was not to fight injustice, but to satisfy the ego of rulers. Examples of such rulers from ancient times include *Kans*, *Ravan*, *Hiranyakashyap*, *Jarasandh*, *Alexander*, *Napoleon*, and *Genghis Khan*.

My intention in mentioning this is to warn loksevi of the initial fame and respect that they will receive in society. It is natural to receive adoration from all quarters when one ventures into the field of selfless service. However, if not handled properly, it will turn the loksevi into a person who is like a mad elephant, attacking and

destroying not only himself and everyone in his group, but also the organization which gave him the opportunity to earn this respect in the first place. The arrogance in the loksevi's mind makes him feel superior to everyone and entices him to strike out on his own to advance his personal ambitions.

When we look around, we can see this everywhere in society. Fights between politicians are often caused by this egotism, no matter how much they try to project it as a difference of opinion. Many good organizations become lost because of fighting among their board members. The end of the *Kauravs* and *Pandavs*, as well as the entire *Yadav dynasty*, was caused not by their greed, but their ego. Religious organizations are disintegrating because people running them are more interested in earning fame and respect than in bringing about actual reforms in society. Unpleasant and violent events witnessed during or after a public election are seen as being done more to satisfy the ego and personal ambitions of electoral candidates than to justify any point. The fights between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law and the terror of a husband inflicted on his wife are also the results of hunger for ego gratification.

The *Pragya Parijan* is instructed to follow the seven essential vows to improve his personality, and to make him capable of performing the highest level of selfless service. If he does not follow the vows properly, the he will find himself in a very difficult situation.

The respect that a loksevi receives from society does not actually belong to him as an individual. It is essentially the noble intention which is respected. Showing respect for a loksevi is a tradition which was started to motivate people to perform more selfless service. Unfortunately, the loksevi often makes the mistake of regarding the respect that is shown to him as his own personal success, and he begins to behave like an egotist. He feels bad when people do not

give him more attention or respect, and he may even engage in practices to keep his colleagues away from all the recognition. His entire focus shifts from performing service to securing respect and fame.

Such an attitude cannot be concealed for very long and soon becomes visible. The loksevi begins to lose credibility as people develop hateful feelings toward him. This reproach begins with his own colleagues and expands to include others. This is the consequence the loksevi ultimately faces because of his greed for fame and recognition, and in the end he loses whatever respect he had earned in society.

Egotism is costly in every sense. People trying to establish themselves in the fields of wealth, knowledge, career, or even beauty must advertise their skills to gain the attention of others. People greedy for fame must resort to similar practices. They want to remain in the limelight one way or another, and for this they keep seeking opportunities to take credit for something. During functions they want to be as visible as possible; to make their presence certain on the stage whether it is needed or not. They are eager to grab media attention and talk incessantly about their contributions to a fund raising, or their important role in some charitable initiative, or about having their names carved in stone for their donations. While they may not realize it, this only makes them more unpopular in society. There are people who look for opportunities to gain monetary benefits from their fame. How much they succeed is irrelevant, for in the end they become a matter of disgrace and shame for themselves. These people belong to that unfortunate lot who lose most in the field of social service. There may be many politicians who, despite being rejected and outclassed, manage to attain power, but the fact is that people lose respect for them and they always remain unpopular in society.

The longing to satisfy their ego drives loksevi to resort to these fatal ways unknowingly. They must remember that such pursuits are foolish, expensive, and futile. One can draw attention by engaging in provocative acts, but it does not yield anything. People who are greedy for fame are met with taunts and laughs, like clowns or jugglers in a circus. They may attempt to conceal themselves, but in their attempts to gain popularity and fame they reveal their own true faces. An actor may wear the mask of a king or seer in a play in order to elevate himself. This may give him the illusion of feeling superior, but even he knows that it is only an act, and in the end he is who he is. This consumes an immense amount of resources.

A fox who wears a lion's skin may indeed gather many animals who will see him as a lion, but this does not make him the king of the jungle. On the other hand, he also becomes an object of ridicule to many. A loksevi must be very careful to be aware of this situation from very early on and should try to stay away from it. It is his modest behavior which earns him more respect, not his advertising campaign. The lust for fame is like man's shadow, and running after it only causes failure and frustration. However, people who believe in sharing fame and recognition with their colleagues and live the modest life of a volunteer receive a tremendous amount of respect even from unexpected sources. They receive love and cooperation from their colleagues. Thus, it is better and wiser for a loksevi to rid himself of fame, position, ego, and greed. He should incorporate humility into his nature and encourage others, while avoiding personal attention. He should implement the philosophy of simple living and high thinking into his life. By bringing more humility into his attitude, character, and behavior, he can achieve true greatness.



Spiritual Advancement Depends on Humility

The seniority of a loksevi is tied closely to his personality rather than his age, knowledge, or experience. The guidelines for this have already been presented in the chapter "Seven Essential Vows for Pragma Parijans." The sincerity of his effort to understand these guidelines will determine the level of reward and benefit the loksevi can expect.

Once a person is involved in the race to improve his social and material status, he turns a blind eye to things such as honesty, humility, and rational thinking. A frog once decided to pump his stomach full of air in order to look like a bull. He kept doing this until his belly burst, thus killing him. This story can be applied to human beings as well. They persist in looking for ways to become rich overnight. They have no patience and are willing to attain success by any means possible. Overcoming this mentality is the loksevi's greatest challenge. However, it is quite surprising to see a loksevi think this way. If societal position and fame were so important for him, why did he choose the difficult path of service in the first

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place? If he had indeed truly dedicated himself to service, then why did he not bring the required humility with him? Service succeeds through humility. In order to ensure a bright future, the loksevi must incorporate humility and courtesy into his nature. People who are only interested in proving themselves superior to colleagues cannot succeed in the field of social service.

In the *Mahabharat* there is a famous story about two brothers, Sund and Upsund. They were blessed with near immortality; the only way either one could die was to be killed by the other. Since they loved each other very much, they assumed that this would never happen. However, both became fascinated by an extraordinary beauty named Tilottama, who could only belong to one of them. They fought between themselves and ultimately both died. During the *Mughal dynasty*, rulers did not mind killing their own kin in order to achieve power. This desire for power has been the main reason behind the downfall of many empires. The *Kauravs* did not agree to live peacefully under the leadership of *Yudhishtir*, and their ambition to prove themselves superior to the *Pandavs* caused the war of the *Mahabharat*. This ultimately resulted in their own downfall. The *Yadav dynasty* of Lord *Krishna* was also very prosperous, but exterminated itself because of its lust for power. *Maharishi Vyas* has described this quite simply: "An organization in which many people want to lead to maintain personal ambitions is bound to destruction."

Loksevi must be aware of this danger. They should not allow themselves to foster their personal ambitions. Those who claim to have stepped forward to protect the world will only bring disgrace and destruction to the mission, that gave them their opportunity, if they begin to push their own petty personal ambitions and feed their egos by trying to prove themselves superior to their colleagues.

In the *Rajasuya Yagya* Lord *Krishna* accepted the job of washing the guests' feet. *Gandhiji* never held office in Congress and yet was respected by all. *Ram* and *Bharat* did not want the kingdom of *Ayodhya*. *Chanakya* stayed in a hut to avoid the arrogance that would have accompanied living in a palace. *King Janak* ploughed the farm despite being a king. *King Nasiruddin* made his living sewing caps. These are some examples of people who inspired their contemporaries to become humble.

On the other hand, there are examples of learned people who paid for their lack of humility. *King Nahush* used sages to carry his palanquin and was cursed to become a snake. When chief justice *Ram Shastri's* wife came home with gifts of jewels and cloth she was turned away, and her husband informed her that a *Brahmin's* wife is expected to follow a simple life. He explained that by accepting those gifts they would lose their treasure of humility. They would have to live like *Dronacharya*, who despite being a great *Guru* and warrior was only a servant in the payroll of *Duryodhan*.

Loksevi should neither expect luxury nor complain when they do not attain it. Seniority should result in more humility in the loksevi's attitude. He should live a disciplined life and avoid competition for rank and position. In the *Pragya Mission*, honest and humble behavior towards others is more influential than skills or abilities. No one should become arrogant. Everyone should strive to be a modest, disciplined volunteer for the mission. People who are not willing to abide by this rule should not become *Pragya Parijans*.

The sixth guru of *Sikhism*, *Guru Arjun Dev*, used to wash dishes in the community kitchen. Yet *Guru Ramdas* chose him as his successor out of all others who desired that position. He judged him by his modesty and his disciplined lifestyle. In the field of spirituality, seniority is not measured by abilities but by virtues. A non-arrogant,

modest nature tops the list. People may be promoted in government jobs based on their abilities, but the same criteria cannot apply to the field of spirituality. People with untoward ambitions might then wish to rule on the basis of their abilities, and no room for good intentions would remain.

When someone is initiated into renunciation, he is asked to forget his past life. He then must live a modest life as a member of the Guru Ashram. Social service also requires a minor renunciation of this sort. Remember that the more humble a person is, the more his seniority. A humble person is like the healthy branch of a tree; when laden with fruit it will always bend towards the ground, but a dead and fruitless branch remains stiff and ultimately falls.

In *Gandhiji's Sabarmati Ashram*, everyone was required to participate in every task. This even included cleaning the toilets, which was considered to be task of a servant. Residents of *Vinoba's Pavanar Ashram* would draw water from the well and provide security for the ashram themselves as well. Similarly, every resident of *Shantikunj* must take responsibility for safety and cleanliness. The *ashram* does not have a designated cleaning staff. Everybody helps keep it clean. There is no place in *Shantikunj* for those who wish to set themselves up as leaders and not volunteers. This kind of attitude has no place in the path to service. People with scouts' background are aware that seniority is measured by how much one is willing to follow the discipline. Those who do not wish to follow the discipline and only wish for a position are not a good match for volunteer organizations.

Volunteers in a *Gurudwara* take up the tasks of cleaning guests' shoes and keeping the stairs of the facility clean as well. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir used to personally visit government offices and provide guidance to her staff. *Kerala's* ex-chief minister Nimboodari

Bhai used to travel to his office on his bicycle. This shows these people's humility. Loksevi must also follow this principle. In such situations, people who only desire leadership achieve nothing, only lose respect.

In the *Brahmin* tradition simplicity, prudence, and humility are the signs of seniority. Lazy, arrogant, or harsh-speaking people are seen as lowly in this field. The purpose behind the old tradition of *bhikshatan*, begging even for basic supplies, was to rid oneself of arrogance. It helps one to make progress on the path of spirituality. The only way to remove a leech is by sprinkling salt on it. Arrogance is similar to a leech, and by undertaking small tasks not normally done because of so-called status, can help one dissolve it.

Pragya Parijans earn respect from society because they are part of a great mission. They should make a practice of using the word "we" and not "I" in public speaking. "I" is all right if one is accepting his own mistake, but "we" should be used when accepting recognition, as that recognition was a result of collective effort. We must always strive to show our love and affection towards our colleagues. Their hard work and cooperation must be appreciated and mentioned in every success. Focus should be kept on duty rather than on rights. The seven vows of *Pragya Parijans* will become boons and shower one with divine blessing in the path of service if one rids himself of arrogance.



What Should the Outlook of a Loksevi Be?

Developing one's character and finding the right path in life are no small tasks. If becoming a loksevi required a lifelong effort of downfall and wandering, how can one expect an overnight transformation in others? Loksevi at least begin with idealistic inclinations, but for others there is still a need to awaken an essential dedication to seva. It requires sustained effort and training.

Adhering to one's principles with a firm will inspires family members to do the same. A loksevi will be able to avoid confusing or confrontational situations with his family if his values are appreciated by them. For example, he might find himself in a conflicting situation if he decides to wear only simple clothes and his son wants to buy him an expensive outfit. He could have easily avoided this situation if he had been able to inspire in his son a respect for his simple lifestyle. The family members would have understood his point and tried to follow him as well.

A loksevi's firm determination to stick to his principles may not always inspire family members to make similar resolutions, but it does force them to

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realize the importance of those principles. There are many ways to prepare family members for one's commitment to principles, each depending upon the situation.

Apart from encouraging family members to embrace positive qualities, the loksevi should also be careful not to increase their responsibilities. In ancient times, people who wished to become involved in seva would do so in adolescence. However, if someone with family responsibilities wanted to get into this field, he would have to first make arrangements for his family's needs. It did not mean that he had to choose the path of renunciation, he just had to minimize his family's liabilities. For example, when the children were grown, he could turn responsibility for the household over to them and move into the field of service to society.

Young loksevi need to be careful about the number of children they want to have. It might be better not to have children at all if the loksevi wishes to seriously devote himself to serving all people. There are many children in the community who are deprived of love and affection, and the loksevi can shower his love on them. It is not necessary that they be his own children. Those who are not willing to marry may remain unmarried, but if they wish to get married they should minimize the number of children they plan to have. When there is reduced pressure from the family, the loksevi will be able to devote the majority of his time and talent to society. Even though he will not have a family, he will be able to shoulder the responsibility of the entire society – something that was done also by the Japanese *Gandhi, Kagawa*.

There are many fields in which seva is required, not all of which are apparent. Some people with both the resources and the desire to serve the world hesitate to take the first step. They appear confused about what to do and how to do it. They reason that there are so many problems in the world, that everything is going wrong, that so

many are caught in the flood, and so on; and thus feel themselves incapable of solving any problems. They begin to focus on the possible results of their efforts before the work even starts. If everyone thought this way, there would be no seva in the world. The first requirement is to become involved to one's full capacity, without caring for the consequences. The squirrel in the *Ramayana* knew that her contribution would not be significant in building the bridge to *Lanka*, but she continued to pour small chunks of sand in the ocean with complete devotion. Her contribution was minute from a result-oriented point of view, but she attained a very high place in the list of contributors to Lord Rama's cause.

Even minor individual attempts are not in vain. The bears and monkeys in Rama's army knew that they were up against a powerful force, but nonetheless they planned to conquer Lanka, and they succeeded. When *Indra* decided to drown the entire *Brij* region out of anger, *Krishna* planned to lift the *Govardhan mountain* with the help of his friends. It seemed like a Herculean task, and they were not sure they could do it. But they did not lose heart, and stuck together. The rest is history. A person feeling positive about a commitment to seva should think about taking one step at a time, and dedicate himself completely to the cause he plans to undertake.

At first glance, seva may not seem like a profitable proposition, but that is not true. A farmer sowing seeds may appear silly to a person who is not familiar with the concepts of agriculture. However, when he sees the result of the farmer's sowing, he becomes pleasantly surprised. Seva bears similar fruits: betterment of society and fulfillment for the loksevi. This is a pleasure that is only felt; people who expect tangible benefits may not realize it and may call it an unprofitable business.

This will always be true of people. The public judges most things only by their physical and tangible benefits. Thus, they are often not

able to realize the value of seva and do not show much interest in it. However, when they see someone volunteer to step into this field and make progress and become happy, they become less confused. They begin to realize the benefits of service and extend their support and respect to the loksevi.

However, if the outlook of a loksevi is not clear and honest, he will become demoralized by the difficulties and rejection that he may have to face in the beginning. He may begin thinking, "Why should I waste my energy on something in which society does not support me, even though society will only benefit from it?" The moment this thought appears in the loksevi's mind, his decline begins.

The emergence of this thought signifies one fact: that the loksevi is losing his outlook. Only a person who considers service to others to be a liability will have a thought like that. The feeling of serving others is often a satisfying one, but the feeling of doing others a favor is simply arrogance. Arrogance ultimately results in the decline of a person. It is therefore important for the loksevi to keep a clean, honest outlook towards service. A true loksevi considers service to the world to be an opportunity to fulfill his duties, to pay back a debt to society. He considers it to be a rare opportunity to receive the love of God. He does not want to lose it and moves forward on his journey alone, no matter how little the cooperation. If he receives any cooperation, he takes it gratefully and does not worry that he might have to share his success with another. His focus is on doing his work diligently and to his best ability. For this reason, he remains devoted and at peace.

Therefore, a person entering the field of service to the world should try to have a positive and honest outlook. Only then will he be able to focus all his energy on serving others. By doing this, he will receive the benefits of self-refinement along with those of bettering society.

Become a Warrior for Self-refinement

The process of engineering a project such as a bridge, building, or dam is easily defined and can be carried out based on the design and architecture. But the process of era reconstruction is very complicated and challenging. It is a task of reverting the flow. It is a task of thought revolution, and changing the mindsets of the masses. It is highly likely that one will face opposition even from those who are close to him once he is on this path. Although it may not appear as violent, this struggle is comparable to the war in the *Mahabharat*.

Abhimanyu, trapped alone in the *Chakravyuh*, did everything he could to fight for his principles. He lost his life to his cause, but became immortal in the pages of history. Those wishing to be a part of the reconstruction of this era will need to become as brave as *Abhimanyu*, and will need to overcome all that is undesirable: ignorance, greed, lust, selfishness, and misguided traditions.

We must begin with taking inventory of ourselves. Negative thoughts carried over from previous births become more and more stubborn when in contact with the ill will in our surroundings, and it can be very difficult even for a strong-willed and idealistic person to escape them. In a time when most people only wish to run after money and fame, why would we want to appear stupid by going against the majority? This is the question our so-called practical majority asks to justify their going with the flow.

In practice, people talk perpetually about their ideals but almost never implement them in real life. Most are afraid of doing any hard work for this. If they find it easier to live with the ignorant belief of achieving salvation by reciting and listening to the ritualistic stories, then how can they have any courage to take even the first step on the path toward fulfillment of any ideal? They remain stuck in the shackles of greed, attachment, and arrogance, and are not able to make even a bit of progress.

It is very important to take the first step in loosening these shackles. If this is not done, then all attempts to uplift one's character will be in vain. Breaking free of this mindset is the real hurdle. The old habits of wasting time and resources in petty things put a tremendous amount of pressure on that intermittent swell of inspiring thoughts, and they remain suppressed. Only the one who is able to conquer his inner conflicts can succeed in opening his path of progress.

The next hurdle, which is as difficult as the first one of inner conflict, arises from one's own family and well-wishers. A person eager to uphold an ideal and take the path of service finds his biggest opponents to be these so-called well-wishers. In today's time, luxuries and comforts appear to be the most important things in life, and these closest people fail to understand why one of their own

wishes to renounce them. Based on their own standards, they can only advise staying away from this difficult path.

How much weight a person gives to these suggestions will determine whether he will go on the selfish or selfless path. Many unsupported "facts" and arguments are presented to trap him both mentally and emotionally. *Goswami Tulsidas* describes a thought which is a solution to this situation. He replied to a letter from *Mirabai* with these words: "One who does not have faith in *Ram* (God) is comparable to an enemy, even if he is my family and loved one." *Prahlad* denounced his father. *Vibhishan* left his brother. *Bharat* left his mother. All of them knew that one who does not believe in *Ram* is not a true well-wisher, and in the end each attained salvation. *Mirabai* understood the message conveyed in these lines, and it inspired her to leave confusion behind and step forward to follow her ideal. Even today, people find refuge in her songs.

Another huge challenge a loksevi faces is dealing with and inspiring those who have already taken steps, knowingly or unknowingly, in the wrong direction. It is difficult to convince such people. They are comfortable with their prejudices and habits and do not wish to realize the importance of what is right. No matter how hard a therapist tries to win over a drug addict, he cannot help him until the patient is convinced. It is possible for him to receive positive signals from the patient sporadically, but if the patient is not serious and willing, they are only gestures intended to help him escape from the uncomfortable therapy session. In reality, he does not wish to or dare to quit the addiction. This is the exact situation a loksevi faces when he is dealing with someone who is deep in wrongdoing.

However, this is no excuse for a loksevi to stop his efforts, and he must keep trying in order to help such people back onto the right

track. This requires tremendous effort on his part. Facts, proofs, and examples only work with those who are willing to listen, but if someone is bent upon proving you wrong, they will not listen to you. There is very little one can do. These people are pitiable, as they appear to have gone into a state where they cannot differentiate right from wrong.

A loksevi has to shoulder many responsibilities, but one of the biggest is going against the current trends in society and creating an atmosphere in which people can understand the reason for his revolutionary thinking and change their mindsets from unfavorable to favorable. This is an important task and cannot be taken lightly. Therefore, there is no choice but to accept this reality and give it full attention, taking the time to assess the condition and finding ways to accomplish this goal.

Great tasks demand sufficient resources. One has to acquire them. In a war zone, a gun can be opposed by a more advanced weapon. A heavy object that cannot be moved by human labor can be lifted with the help of a crane. A large rock cannot be hammered down, but it can be broken with the aid of dynamite. Similarly, huge problems can only be solved by people with brilliant minds.

Keeping these factors in mind, persons willing to challenge such problems must possess exceptional talent and brain power. These dedicated souls must make their personalities strong enough to weather any storm without deviating from their paths. Not everyone is capable to achieving these kind of goals. For that, the determination and sincerity of *Arjun* and *Eklavya* is required to maintain the necessary concentration.

A loksevi must hone his character to a precision like that of a sonar-guided missile, which does not deviate from its path until it has hit

its mark. Such people are intelligent, determined, and focused. They can reach the goal they have set without fail, just like the never failing weapons of Lords *Indra* and *Brahma*.

Intelligence with focused attitude brings other traits as well. Forces of vitality and brilliance bless a person who possesses these traits. A river's depth is a measure of the water it can contain, and other streams and rivers come and submerge themselves in that river and contribute to its power. Similarly, a person who wants wholehearted support of the entire society should first develop depth in his character. Along with intelligence and brilliance, determination, self restraint, and tenacity are prerequisites for this. However, to develop these qualities he must take his thought process, character, and behavior to the highest level possible. Such devoted individuals are blessed, and they develop the ability to overcome any adverse situation.

A determined person has the ability to fight against his own weaknesses. He is able to reduce them to a level where they will not risk his reputation and thereby undo all his hard work. There have been many people who achieved greatness after learning from their past mistakes. Anyone can reform himself by making sincere efforts. *Ambapali*, *Angulimaal*, and *Ashok* are examples.

What will be preached in society must be practiced on the self first. Any commitment taken on in the past must be fulfilled with total dedication. An indecisive mind is a matter of ridicule. Completion of commitments must be timely, especially when they are focused on idealistic issues such as reforms, self-control, etc. This verse from the *Ramayan* must always be remembered: "I would give my life, but not my word." People who take on new resolutions every day but are not able to fulfill them lose their credibility and become laughingstocks to society.

A volunteer promoting the concept of era reconstruction should sound so courteous, gentle, and pleasing that a listener is delighted just by meeting him. He should leave a first impression of such graciousness that the listener feels great respect for him, and immediately feels comfortable and connected.

By being engaging in this manner, it should not be difficult to mold the opposition in your favor. Complications arise when egos become involved. Such situations should not be created anywhere, ever. But if it happens, it is a better idea to leave the discussion at a place where it would be possible to settle the matter peacefully in the future than to end it there on a bitter note. Differences in international politics are resolved to a great degree by applying this technique. The spokesperson appointed for this job must possess the talent of keeping the other party engaged, and of being able to use diplomatic skill even when there are grave differences between the two parties. Only such diplomats earn respect and reputation from the government and in society.

Courtesy can be defined as being able to follow one's duties with civility, modesty, and humility. The ways that courtesy is expressed may differ according to local traditions and customs, but two elements common to all of them are modesty of nature and giving respect and recognition to others. Even a tiny bit of arrogance or impatience can wreck one's entire standing and distance even those who have been supportive. Volunteers spend most of their time in the field, and they must have flexible attitudes and be courteous and soft-spoken with everyone. This may seem minor, but it is very critical. The success of a volunteer depends completely on these qualities.

There are two more characteristics that a loksevi must develop in his behavior. Again, these may seem minor, but they are capable of

producing extraordinary results. First, he must develop transparency in financial dealings. Public money must be spent wisely, and every financial transaction must be recorded and made available for public review in an honest and transparent manner. A person responsible for money must treat it as would an ascetic who has no attachment to worldly things.

Another requirement is related to male and female colleagues working together. In a public event, both male and female volunteers must help, and it is extremely important to observe purity of feelings in such situations. Too much interaction between male and female youth creates unnecessary doubt in the public's eyes, and it does not take long for a molehill to turn into a mountain. The situation can very easily get out of hand. This causes great harm and insult to not only the people concerned, but also to the goal for which they were gathered together.

No matter how clean our minds are, we cannot silence the public. This unfortunate and unpleasant situation can occur anywhere, and therefore it is very important to take extra precaution, especially when male and female members are going to be working together. It is essential to plan in way that these doubts do not have any chance to arise in the first place.

There is another important lesson here for loksevi. Those who are always looking for credit and attempting to project themselves as leaders actually become unpopular and silly in the eyes of the public. They may attain some respect in the beginning, but it does not last long, and quickly disappears. There are some people who are always looking to gain publicity through media and stage appearances, but they simply lose all the respect they may have had. It creates unnecessary rivalry and jealousy and brings a bad name to the organization they are representing.

Gandhiji was known for his simplicity, humility and modesty. This was the reason he was the backbone of Congress without even formally holding a position, and this is how a personality should be established. In the absence of these essential characteristics, people attempting to become leaders and politicians end up looking like comedians. A leader's respect and leadership can not last very long in the absence of his credibility. It is essential that loksevi are fully aware of this fact.



A Loksevi's Credibility and Character

A loksevi needs to consistently work on refining his attitude in order to maintain the dignity and ideals of seva. He should have a dynamic personality that leaves a lasting impression on people. There are no specific rules for accomplishing this, but there are a few things that can instill higher ideals in the loksevi's personality if they are understood and thoroughly implemented.

Many people do not get the results they desire from performing seva. This is often because they lack the higher qualities needed to motivate others and improve their lives. A good orator may be able to impress people with his words, but words alone will not make a lasting impact. For an enduring influence one must have a powerful character. In the words of a great thinker, "Everyone is idealistic in thoughts, everyone realizes what is good and what is bad; however, it is forgotten in practical life. One does not want to involve in the right and relinquish the wrong despite knowing them."

Chapter

6

Loksevi who consider service and their personal lives to be separate must understand that service is their life's observance, not a profession. Public servants, government officials, and domestic help are examples of people who are also involved in the act of service, but they do it as part of their profession. It is their routine job, they may not have any genuine passion for serving others. People willing to perform true seva must develop passion and dedication for it.

Efforts put into seva are futile if the personal life of a loksevi is wretched. *Swami Ramtirth* once said, "A loksevi needs to remember that it is not his tongue but his entire personality which does the talking, and people would rather listen only to his personality." His personality becomes great when he practices what he preaches. This is true of anyone, not just the loksevi. A person can influence others only when there is no disparity between his thoughts and actions. Such person can influence both ways, positively as well as negatively. A prostitute is able to attract a common man because her words and actions correspond. A habitual drinker leads others to addiction by the same principle. He is doing what he tells others to do, and is thus able to influence.

When a loksevi is honestly committed to his beliefs, his thoughts and actions become one and he can leave a strong impression in the field. It is not very easy, at least in the beginning, to maintain no disparity between thoughts and actions. The refinement of one's character takes some time, but the loksevi should not use this as an excuse for not trying hard enough. There can be a difference in the levels of thoughts and actions, but the directions of both should be the same. The family wedding is an example. The loksevi might preach to society not to make such an event extravagant, but when it comes to his own family he should employ the same principles. For a large family, it is understandable to have a grand get-together, but wasting money for showing off would not be right. One will have no

impact preaching to others to lead a simple and prudent life if he himself wears expensive clothing.

For this reason, from ancient times it has been a tradition for the loksevi to live a simple life and keep his needs to a minimum. When it comes to the convenient life, no comfort seems unnecessary. First, a comfortable house; after that come things needed in the house for further comfort, and so on. Each requirement can be justified if one has a desire for it. However, a loksevi must have a different perspective on this: to manage with average or minimum resources. Once we begin to reduce our requirements we will realize that there are many things we can live without. If we have our basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, that should suffice.

Another important aspect of a loksevi's personality is his eating habits. A person involved in seva must maintain clean, moderate eating habits. They keep him healthy and leave a good impression on people, so he should make some type of resolution regarding his eating style. People often prepare elaborate meals for a loksevi when he is out in the field, and while he may be eating simple food at home, he may not be able to deny people's requests when he is offered such delicious food. He does not need to hurt people's feelings, but he should ask them in advance to prepare simple food. When a guest requests that he receive simple arrangements as other family members do, it results in more affection and respect for the guest.

The loksevi should establish certain rules for his eating habits and attempt to follow them religiously. An example would be having only one or two dishes for a meal. People often serve a delicious multicourse meal out of affection when the loksevi is in their area. This may put him in a confusing situation in which he must decide whether to hurt their feelings or break his resolution. It is important

to accept people's gestures, but he should try to stick to his principles. In order to do it, he can taste a small portion of the food and express his appreciation for their efforts.

In addition to food, the loksevi should also pay attention to things which might make people around him uncomfortable. He should have a flexible, adjusting attitude, and learn to ignore any discomfort caused by a lack of resources. For example, some have a habit of drinking a glass of milk before they go to bed. A loksevi should avoid asking for such things when out in the field and try to do without them during that time.

A loksevi should aspire to bring into his life the virtues of self-reliance, regularity, and discipline. These important qualities uplift one's personality. Self-reliance means taking care of your own needs. Whether at home or in the field, this must become a habit. Personal tasks such as washing one's laundry should never be left for others to complete. This will go a long way toward developing a feeling of self-reliance, thereby improving personality.

It is important to lead by example. Quite often, a loksevi is seen giving directions to others and expecting them to complete a task according to his instructions. For example, let's say there is a project underway to clean a village. If he reaches the village and simply begins explaining the importance of the project, no one will come forth to help. There is a simple reason for this: talk alone is not enough to motivate people. The loksevi also needs a practical and effective plan for his idea, but even that is not enough. It may attract a few enthusiasts, but it will not convince everyone. If he decides only to direct those who are willing to help, people will not be able to connect with him, and this will hurt his reputation. The only thing that will work for the loksevi in such a situation is to take the initiative for the project with the help of those few enthusiasts. Once

this happens, more hands will join him. It is important that he remember not to project himself as someone special. His personality may be one level above the common public's, but that is no reason to advertise it.

A loksevi also must be free of greed and arrogance. Greed forces a person to do things for his own self-interest, even things involving the misuse of public property. There are times when a loksevi may need to take responsibility for public projects that involve financial dealings. He must maintain his credibility to the utmost in such a situation. Being attentive to it is not enough; he must work religiously and honestly towards it. He must publicly release the details of such financial transactions, as transparency and fairness are extremely important in handling jobs that involve financial dealings.

Credibility in character is as important as credibility in financial matters. People judge someone more on his character than by his financial position. The loksevi must have an honest attitude towards the opposite gender. Male loksevi should avoid any unnecessary conversation with female colleagues. Tasks for male and female workers should be clearly identified, and efforts should be made to follow these guidelines properly. If the frequency of meetings with female workers is decreased, this will avoid giving people unnecessary fodder for gossip.

Many loksevi are needed to create a better atmosphere in society today. This will only be possible when people realize the meaning and importance of seva. They must change their perceptions towards it, improve their personality, and step forward on this path. Even the common public can be motivated to follow this path if their perception is changed and they realize the importance of service to others.

Those who are claiming to change this era must help groom people who are willing to take steps on the path to seva. Improvement in their personalities will ultimately result in bringing about improvement in society. People practicing such principles in life will never be swayed from the right path, and will become the leaders of the new era.



Hurdles and Distractions in the Path of Service

It is natural to feel enthusiastic about doing service after its importance and necessity for one's growth in life is realized. Many people feel this enthusiasm at some point but cannot sustain it, and tend to lose their initial passion with time. One reason for this is their failure to develop the necessary faith and enthusiasm for service. Some people go further on the path, but when faced with hardships, they too give up and quit for fear of failure.

There are many other obstacles which hamper progress on the path to service. People can be distracted by false ideas and lose focus, or even become arrogant after a little initial success. Such situations can be avoided if the loksevi is careful and has a vision for the future. Sometimes he is not able to carry on the discipline necessary for service even after dedicating his life to it. These and other mistakes, whether habitual or circumstantial, tend to push a loksevi off his path.

It is important to remember that to be able to guide others, a good character is required more than proficiency in leadership. In the past, people who decided to carry out the responsibilities of seva would spend some time building their character and developing qualities such as self-control, generosity, and kindness before going into this field. If service is undertaken with true dedication, its true rewards can be experienced more as self-growth than as a contribution to the good of others. *Pragya Parijans* stepping forward on this path need to remember that they must resolve to work towards developing their characters to a much higher level than that of the masses.

What would this take? The most important step is working diligently to change one's attitude and perception. It is a well-known fact that greed and attachment are the two biggest hurdles in the path to spirituality. A greedy, materialistic person would never think of doing something for others. He is always looking for personal gain. Even if he did consider serving others, as a show-off he would always be looking for deals to buy more fame with fewer resources.

The second obstacle is attachment. A person with too much attachment to his body and family members becomes excessively focused on bodily comforts and the happiness of his family, for which he will do anything, right or wrong, to fulfill. This attachment confines him inside this narrow world and he spends an entire life killing himself to fulfill the needs of his family. It is fine to fulfill one's family duties, but pampering them to the point where their growth is hindered, making them lazy, greedy, and incompetent in personality is not a wise idea. Attachment forces one to take this path and not care about the real duty towards the family. It is better to motivate one's family towards higher values and positive thinking than provide them with comforts.

Raising a family should not be difficult for anyone. Keeping in mind this new perspective, it can be seen that there are many who can support themselves and others as well in the family, but who are living as though they are incapable simply because they receive too much care, cater to the ego of a family member, or receive pressure from society. When one breadwinner in the family does all the work when the others can work but do not want to because of laziness, this results in extravagance, as family members do not realize the value of money and hard work. Too much attachment to the family makes one selfish and blind to the future. A man considers himself big hearted handing his money over to his sons, even though they may be earning their own income and may only waste his money in partying. Spending time and money on his children and grandchildren is all such a person wants to do. In the end when his lifetime earnings are depleted by his grown and capable children, it is too late to realize the mistake.

These are only a few examples. There are many more. One could be having many children and celebrating, getting deeper in attachment, not realizing the burden of responsibility it brings. Therefore, attachment is foremost among the hurdles on the spiritual path, and greed does not lag far behind. They resemble *Ravan* and *Ahiravan*, two brothers in the *Ramayan*, equally powerful. Greed and attachment, despite their own lack of strength, can overpower and make one's life miserable.

Attachment is foremost among the hurdles on the spiritual path, and greed does not lag far behind. They resemble *Ravan* and *Ahiravan*, two brothers in the *Ramayan* who were equally powerful. When not controlled, greed and attachment, despite their lack of strength, can overpower a person's thoughts and emotions and make his life miserable.

Arrogance is another hurdle which can easily attack a worker. It is sinister and elusive, and no one really cares to fight it. But it feeds upon one like a leech, and once it gains control of the personality it causes more damage to a person than greed and attachment.

Arrogance comes from a desire for status. It makes a person expect more importance, position, fame, and respect in society than others. These are the aspirations of arrogance. Many people are drawn into the latest fashion and cosmetic trends; this is one example of how arrogance can overpower a person's thinking. It is no secret that such things are expensive and time-consuming, and yet people continue in their desire to appear attractive. Another example is the display of wealth. People spend so much on a luxurious house, vehicle, or other commodity in order to project the impression that they are very rich, even though in reality this may not be true at all. Some people spend extravagantly in front of others simply to create a false impression of their wealth. Then they have to cut down on the basic necessities to compensate for their foolishness. This mistake is obvious to any mature person, but their desire to prove themselves to be better does not let them think clearly.

These are only ordinary people. And yet even idealists, the spiritually awakened, those who have already made a mark in the field of service to others, are not immune to this disease of arrogance. Various religious groups and organizations are involved in this power struggle all the time; each of them attempts to project their own organization as superior to the others. Why do members of groups with the same goals fight for position? Why are they busy trying to prove others are inferior to them? The public can be fooled by their excuses, but the truth is that each member is trying to prove himself superior to the other to satisfy a desire for status. Arrogance is, if not the most important, one of the main reasons behind the disgrace of such organizations. Several exceptions to principles can

be argued to explain the problems in such situations, but if analyzed rationally, one can find the uncontrolled little mouse of arrogance instigating the unpleasant state of affairs.

People who are detached from family and other ties are not exempt from arrogance either. A loksevi unable to rid himself of arrogance will attempt to become popular in society at any cost, like a beggar who accumulates wealth for his entire life and leaves it hidden in the rags at his death. To earn popularity a loksevi may brag about having supernatural powers or the ability to perform miracles. Such people are a liability to the organizations they work for. They do more harm than good. For this reason, anyone who seeks to excel in the field of service is advised to first rid himself of greed, attachment, and arrogance. In the past, the loksevi had to go door to door begging for their food in order to rid themselves of arrogance. Food could have been easily arranged, but without a comparable penance, how can one expect to remove the arrogance and become a true seer, a true loksevi?

Residents of *Gandhiji's ashram* had to complete all sorts of petty tasks, from cleaning rooms to cleaning toilets, and they did this with full dedication. The *Pragya Mission* also requires residents at the *Shantikunj* ashram to take part in tasks like these, such as cleaning drains, sweeping streets, and picking up trash. The purpose is the same – to break down their arrogance. In *Shantikunj*, every resident is advised to donate their personal wealth to the ashram and to live on a nominal payment. If a loksevi lives on money contributed by the public, he does not become a salaried employee. He should consider this money a token of faith from the public and accept it with gratitude. Some people think, Why should I earn my living when I am donating my time? Why don't I earn my living by other means and still help, and be better than those who earn their living by helping? Some people do not donate their time at all for this

reason. There is no higher principle at work in this, it is simply their egotism speaking. If someone's work is worth a thousand dollars and he is taking only a hundred dollars in payment, the nine hundred dollar difference will be considered a hidden donation to the organization. For a true loksevi, it is important to display true modesty.

Another thing to be noted here is to identify and avoid people who are always there to hinder the work of seva. There are many such people, who can corrupt even a noble soul with their low tricks. Every organization must be careful of such people, who are like *Ravan's* brother *Kalnemi*, who was notorious for corrupting people's minds, inciting *Ravan* to kidnap *Sita* and sending *Surpanakha* to seduce *Ram*. He even brainwashed *Marich*, *Kumbhakaran*, *Manthara*, and *Kaikeyi*. He is active even today, attacking anyone who is not mentally strong, in the disguise of a seer, *Yogi*, or *Mahatma*. In addition to greed, attachment, and arrogance, *Pragya Parijans* must be wary of such people.



The Lifestyle of a Loksevi

The desire to make a difference in society and the enthusiasm to work for it are not enough to begin working in the field of seva. The first requirement is a wholehearted effort to improve one's attitude, beliefs, and perspectives. The number of years and the total energy of one's lifetime are limited, and it is up to every individual to decide how he wants to utilize them. An ordinary person is always working to fulfill his selfish desires, but the goal of a loksevi is different. He wishes to use his energy and resources for the welfare of others. It is important that he takes a different view on his resources and energy than common man.

When seva appears difficult to a person, it is often because he has not changed his attitude. Personal needs for example, there are people who consider the acquisition of luxuries and comforts to be life's ultimate purpose, and their entire lives are spent in pursuit of this goal, even though not every one is able to attain these. Most people feel that those who attain it are blessed. A loksevi's outlook should be

different. He should value personality and character over material wealth, or, as others, he will become mired in the problems of the material world. The loksevi cannot succumb to this pressure and should have a different purpose for his life.

A loksevi must minimize his basic needs. It is a common perception that a luxurious style of living enhances one's reputation, but in reality this is not true. A person's reputation is bolstered by his character, dignity, and good deeds – not by material possessions or wealth. Every seer, thinker, and great soul of the past has earned his or her name by following this path. Simplicity is nowhere more apparent than in the lifestyles of the seers. *Chanakya*, who advised *Chandragupt* on transforming India into one nation, could have accumulated great wealth and lived a luxurious life. Instead, he followed the path of living with the bare minimum in a small hut and in so doing strengthened the ideals of seva.

Even in recent times we have seen great individuals follow this example earn great respect from society; noble souls including dignitaries of the 19th and 20th centuries such as *Gopalkrishnan Gokhle*, *Maharishi Arvind*, *Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar*, and *Mahatma Gandhi*. Despite belonging to wealthy families, they all chose to live simply. Gopalkrishnan Gokhle came from a financially strong background, yet for his entire life he chose not to spend more than 30 rupees a month for his family's needs. Maharishi Arvind, after finishing his studies, held a post in *Vadodara* at a salary of 500 rupees per month, but made adjustments in his lifestyle to live on only 75 rupees per month. *Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's* monthly salary was also 500 rupees, but he decided not to spend more than 50 on his living. Mahatma Gandhi always wore only one simple *dhoti*, and he always ate simple food, but he was content and close to the masses, who considered him their own. People were able to immediately connect with him, and this brought him unprecedented respect.

These are only a few examples. Every great soul in the world has followed the principle of minimal needs. When buying something, Socrates would ask himself, "Do I really need this; am I unable to manage without it?" Only if he could answer yes would he buy it. Keeping one's needs to a minimum is a matter of dignity and self-confidence; when this attitude is developed there is no fear of scarcity and no occasion for complaint about unmet needs.

Managing with minimal resources is a lifestyle which many people may look down upon and label as low, unfortunate, or miserly. However, people's perceptions are constantly changing. Simplicity has never been disrespected or looked upon with disgust. On the contrary, people living simply and with minimum needs and have always earned extraordinary respect from society. *Mahatma Gandhi*, as noted earlier, managed on very little and often used things that were rejected or considered inferior by others, but people still respected him. In fact, people even began to take pride in living like him.

In general, unclean and ludicrous living is despised, but simplicity is always respected. People in underprivileged communities are not looked down upon because they do not have sufficient resources; they are looked down upon because of their untidy and chaotic living style. Having fewer resources does not make anyone superior or inferior to others. The dignity is lost because of untidiness and chaotic living. A loksevi should maintain this perspective and live a simple, clean and organized lifestyle. He should take pride in living such a life.

A loksevi should always understand the need for a pristine character and immaculate personality. One way to demonstrate these traits is to lead by example rather than words. In short, one should

understand the dignity of this field and act to maintain it. Seers and *Brahmins* of ancient times involved in societal service considered simplicity of attire to be part of their heritage, and took pride in it. However, the so-called Brahmins of today engage in questionable practices that make them no different from ordinary people. In fact, their actions today have only hurt their reputation.

There was a time when even the attire of a seer symbolized selfless service and inspired faith. There is a famous story of an entertainer in a king's court who was asked by the king to put on a big show. He came to the court disguised as a seer. The king offered him a lot of money, gold, etc., but he did not even look at any of it. In the end when he revealed himself, the king asked him why he did not run away with the money that was offered, as he could never earn that much in his entire lifetime. The entertainer replied that if he had, the faith and dignity of the seers would have been lost, so he could not do it even for the sake of a performance. Here the point is that in ancient times just the attire of a seer was enough to awaken the faith and respect of others.

Today's loksevi should also aspire to earn this level of trust and love through his lifestyle and behavior. This requires a development of the self. Introspecting, finding one's defects, working on them, and motivating oneself to grow in a positive direction are things that must be practiced in daily life. A loksevi should develop his personality so that he becomes a living model for inspiring others, which needs no words.

After personal development, the next consideration is the perspective towards the family. A loksevi could argue that he is ready to go through any type of penance himself, but does not want his family to go through any hardships. He may resolve to minimize his own needs, but not want to reduce his children's comforts. It is only

natural that people will come into contact with the loksevi's family, and a visibly extravagant lifestyle on their part will make his practice of simplicity seem hypocritical. This will result in loss of faith in the loksevi, and the very purpose of his adopting a simple lifestyle will be defeated. People will feel that his own simple lifestyle is only a drama and will question his preaching of simplicity.

It is never advisable to amass excessive wealth for family members, as it may push them on the wrong path. For example, if children in a family have access to every mode of transportation, they may grow up never willing to walk one block. They would become lazy, and would not be able to live through any tough situation which might arise in their lives where they could not afford these comforts.

It is a much better to instill positive qualities and build character based on high ideals than to accumulate wealth for family members. Children will be much better off becoming brave, hardworking, enthusiastic, and kindhearted rather than lethargic and futile. Inherited wealth will be pointless in either situation, whether the child deserves it or not. If he does, he will be able to acquire as much as he needs himself. If he does not, he will waste all the wealth on himself anyway.

An ideal personality also inspires other members of a family. Parents often cut down on their own needs in order to provide comforts for their children, but if efforts are made to inspire the children on their parents' path, then they are more likely to be successful in the future. A child's future is made not by amassing wealth for him, but by implanting good character in him. It will take the patience of an artist, but a loksevi must consistently provide the right environment for inspiring the members of his family to live by high ideals. Eventually, they will understand and follow the path of his ideals.

Conduct and Behavior of a Loksevi

A person's behavior creates the first impression of him. This includes his manner of speech, dress, and physical appearance. One may not be able to deduce a person's nature, attitude, or habits at first glance, but his behavior can be observed, and thus it is what introduces him to the outside world. Therefore, it is said that a man's actions truly represent his inner self. Sometimes a person may appear very sober and simple, but his tone conveys the shortcomings of his nature the moment he starts to speak.

An unrefined mind constantly engages one in dirty or irrational acts. The first impression caused by such behavior lasts very long and can even negate the impact of good things that one may do in future. Thus, it is important for a loksevi to live the by higher ideals and create the right impression in society through his conduct.

Courtesy and humility are key factors in shaping the behavior of a person. These are the qualities that

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truly define a person's character. Some people often use an authoritarian tone to prove their point, to show their superiority, or even to display their affinity to the person they are speaking to. For such people, it is thought that either the person has passion but lacks required qualities for this field, or he entered this field just to satisfy his own ego. Making a suggestion carries lot more weight than commanding someone to do something; it also indicates the loksevi is there to convey a message rather than to project an image of superiority. Courtesy means showing respect, and humility means the expression of pure love and affection in speech and behavior for everyone.

Love and affection are natural feelings which are expressed all the time. When two uncultured people meet, they also express love. However, their way of expressing these feelings is often awkward and speaks of their true personality. A loksevi has to educate others and at the same time better the level of his own personality; therefore it becomes essential for him to reflect humility and courtesy in his behavior all the time.

The loksevi should also always maintain humility in speech and should avoid the habit of getting agitated while talking. There are some people who are harsh and offensive by nature. Sometimes they may behave like that so as to not budge from their stance. But such an attitude should not be expressed by a loksevi. He should not sound bitter and harsh, even if it is a matter of principle. A determination to defend certain principles is one thing, but uttering harsh words and offending others in their defense is something else.

Determination means standing firm on higher ideals and beliefs. Many times situations arise where these principles are tested by pressure from others. A person could be enticed by the crowd, by their love and faith towards him, or they could actually begin

worshipping the loksevi. It is important to stay focused and determined in such situations, but there is no need to act offensive and harsh.

It is possible for a person to firmly and graciously hold to his principles without creating hard feelings, and not violate them because of pressure from others. *Mahatma Gandhi* had to be firm many times in his life when standing up for his principles, but he did not do it in a harsh manner. His non-Indian colleagues once invited him for dinner and offered him meat. After he politely refused to eat it, they started arguing with him, citing the health benefits and trying to provoke him with arguments such as "What's the use of a resolution which does not yield anything useful?" *Gandhiji* ended the debate by simply saying that "Right now I'm not trying to explain the benefits or usefulness of my resolution. I'm merely keeping a promise I made to my mother to not eat meat or drink liquor." And thus without creating any harsh feelings *Gandhiji* silenced his friends and was able to stick to his principles.

A loksevi should explain his point in a polite and humble manner. He should hold genuine feelings for his position, otherwise he will seem artificial. There are some people who may not be sincere but are talented speakers who are clever and can fool even an educated person. This false impression does not last, and while a fraud can accomplish his mission in this short time, it will not work for a loksevi.

The purpose of *seva* is to leave a lasting impression and bring about positive change in people's lives. A loksevi needs to be full of positive and inspiring emotions. It is only natural that a person with good and positive feelings in his heart will greet everybody with joy and cheerfulness. The loksevi should not only cultivate these feelings in his heart, but also start working hard on reflecting them in his

behavior until it becomes a habit for him. As described earlier, the objective is to bring about change in others and not just create a good impression. It is crucial that a loksevi cultivate good and positive feelings until he becomes one with them.

Artificiality in behavior does not last long and is exposed sooner or later. The way to avoid disingenuous behavior is to be honest and true to yourself and to work on inculcating the necessary qualities. No matter how cleverly it is practiced, deception cannot be hidden under a veil for very long; it is exposed the moment one loses control of his mind. There was an incident that illustrates this: A leading politician from *Uttar Pradesh* (in the hilly region) learned to speak both Hindi and English, and would no longer talk even to his friends in his native dialect. He would converse only in English when among the elite class. He developed a serious illness, and at first he spoke to his doctors in English, then gradually switched to Hindi. As his condition deteriorated he started losing control of his mind and began to speak in his native dialect. Even people who had been with him for a long time had never known of this and were surprised to see him like that.

The message here is that one can do things that are not natural to him only as long as his mind is under his control. His true personality emerges when he starts to lose control of his mind. A person aspiring to become a loksevi needs to understand this psychological phenomenon and should try to better his inner self, rather than its outward manifestations. As he gains maturity in his inner feelings, it will become apparent in his actions and behavior. "Behavior speaks louder than words" is the formula propagated by our ancient seers, and it should be understood and applied in life.



Public Conduct of a Loksevi

A loksevi should not criticize or gossip when interacting with people. Even if the intention is to bring about positive change, people may take offense. They may take it personally and irrationally presume the loksevi to be an enemy. For example, to say "you are absolutely wrong; why did you do such a bad thing?" will only make people feel dejected, even if the intention was only to point out a mistake. It would be better to say "you probably were not aware this was a risky proposition and you suffered from that misunderstanding. It's better to be more careful." Then, if needed, guidance for correcting the mistake could be offered.

However, such conversations should never take place in public. The loksevi should talk with the person in private, where he should take care to not say anything which might sound negative or demoralizing. Also, whenever possible, effort should be made to highlight and appreciate the positive qualities of the person, even when making suggestions. After all, anyone willing to offer his

services for a noble cause must already have some good intentions in his heart. Appreciation and public recognition will inspire him to strengthen these positive elements even further.

A loksevi, however, should be careful not to shower excessive praise on someone. Unwarranted appreciation can cross the line into flattery and may provoke a person to develop false pride. The difference between praise and flattery is the same as that between nectar and poison. Appreciation inspires a person to proceed on the path of progress, while flattery may result in making him arrogant, thereby misleading him and even causing his downfall. There is a fine line between praise and flattery. Appreciating someone's positive qualities and dedication qualifies as praise. This motivates the person to nurture these qualities even more. Flattery conveys a notion of superiority by comparing the person with an inferior individual.

Therefore it is important not to compare a person with anyone else when praising him. This helps motivate him and lead him in the right direction. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. It is difficult even for a loksevi to achieve total perfection all the time. It is natural for a person to work on his weaknesses, but it does not give him pleasure when they are discussed in public. It is important for a loksevi not to direct any personal criticisms towards someone. A general analysis of improvements observed in someone's behavior may be acceptable, but when the comments are personally directed at an individual, it may make him bitter. A loksevi can be more effective when pointing out areas in need of improvement is done along with highlighting a person's positive qualities.

Along with courtesy and an inspiring and appreciative attitude, a loksevi must exhibit patience while interacting with people. It is true that he needs to take his message to the world, but the public views

him only as a representative and guide. They expect him to listen patiently to their problems, understand them, and suggest solutions. The loksevi needs to be patient and be willing to listen to them, rather than only focusing on conveying his message. The message a loksevi is trying to popularize can be conveyed effectively only when people are ready to listen to him.



Seven Precepts for Pragya Parijans

While he was leaving for the Himalayas in June 1971, Pujya Gurudev had formulated seven key precepts that he required all his disciples to abide by. At this time, Vandaniya Mataji was also moving from Mathura to Shantikunj in Haridwar. These precepts were published in the monthly magazine Yug Nirman Yojna and were also distributed in leaflet form. We are presenting them again here as guiding principles of our mission which should be spread among all members. Every member of our Gayatri Pariwar must adhere to these in order to stay focused on the righteous path. Notes have been added to account for the revisions that were made after Gurudev and Mataji left their physical bodies. It falls to our dedicated senior parijans in particular to make sure that these precepts are being followed correctly. Confusion, indiscipline, and deviations often occur due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the Pujya Gurudev's instructions.

1. Organizational structure

There must only be one central governing body, and all associated individuals must be in direct contact

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with it. The formation of regional or intermediate centers should be kept to a minimum, as such centers are usually established to bolster individual ambitions or compete against the central body. The central body's strong foundation allows it to provide guidance not only to mission activities in India, but also worldwide.

Note: The mission has grown over time, and several local units now exist in the form of branches, *mandalas*, and *peeths*. However, there should not be a hierarchy of command here. All units must communicate with and report to the center directly. One or more units can work together depending on local needs and circumstances; such efforts will be appreciated. However, they should not dictate or interfere in each other's direct functioning. Their goal should be to build a support system as needed, by cooperating with each other.

2. Guru Diksha

Initiating someone into *Guru Diksha* is a great responsibility, which only a true guru can perform. The ritual of Guru Diksha can be performed by anyone; however, the person conducting the ritual must not proclaim himself to be the guru. Someone who does so may actually end up causing more harm than benefit, both to the follower and to himself. Instead, the red torch should be recognized as the guru while initiating someone in to the *Gayatri Mantra Diksha*.

- As the *Granth Sahib* in *Sikhism* and the saffron flag of the RSS both symbolize the concept of the guru, all Guru Diksha initiations should proceed via the symbolic guru of our mission – the *Masha* symbol.
- Pujya Gurudev, who is responsible for making *Vedmata-Devmata Gayatri* reach everyone, will be the *acharya* of these ceremonies. Through him, the light of *Gayatri Mantra* will truly initiate the person being given the Guru Diksha. Once initiated, the devotee

will receive blessings, protection, and divine guidance from Pujya Gurudev.

- The *parijans* performing the rituals for the Guru Diksha ceremony should only consider themselves to be respectable representatives.

3. Functions which involve yagya

Irrespective of the size and scale of the program, efforts should be made to have *yagya* using only up to nine *kunds*. In exceptional cases where a grand program is being planned, the approval of the central governing body is required. Large *yagya* programs may produce better results, but they also carry more chances of irregularities and problems, so it makes sense to opt for a middle path involving fewer *kunds*.

Pujya Gurudev had encouraged organizing *yagya* programs to promote certain specific aims, such as:

- Bringing the science and philosophy behind *yagya* to light and reviving the original tradition of *yagya* for the benefits of the masses.
- Making the people aware of the disciplines and thoughts that *yagya* promotes.
- Disseminating revolutionary thoughts in public gatherings through *yagya* programs.

In order to reach out to the maximum number of people and achieve these goals while also keeping in mind the constraints of modern lifestyles, Pujya Gurudev introduced the concept of *Dipa Yagya* and integrated it into *Gayatri Pariwar* programs. *Dipa Yagya* is actually more effective in achieving the above-mentioned goals in an inexpensive manner, yet covering wider grounds. Normal (*kundiya*) *yagya* may be conducted by devotees at their own expense only as part of the concluding ceremony (*puṇahuti*) of a collective *sadhana*.

The philosophy and benefits of yagya can be propagated to households only by observing these guidelines carefully.

4. Presiding priest of a yagya (*yagyacharya*)

There will not be a presiding priest in any yagya conducted under the banner of the Gayatri Pariwar. Pujya Gurudev will preside over such programs in his spirit form and will provide the necessary guidance and protection. Anyone proficient in religious rituals is free to conduct the yagya.

5. Ceremonial processions

Any procession being organized by the Gayatri Pariwar, such as the *Kalash Yatra*, *Visarjan*, etc., should only carry, with due respect, the symbols of *Gayatri Mata* and the red torch. There should be no hype or procession for any individual (the leader, head of the center, etc.). This will help prevent unnecessary accumulation of arrogance, ego, and jealousy.

6. Blessings and boons

Individuals should refrain from seeking or offering blessings at a personal level. Nobody should play the role of a mediator between the Supreme Power and the individual soul. When those who are incapable begin something like this it always ends with deception. Members of the Gayatri Pariwar should not misguide anyone by illusory attractions or false claims.

7. Monetary donations

Gayatri Pariwar members should not accept monetary donations for personal use. All financial transactions should be processed through the central governing body. This includes seeking financial assistance from the center in a time of need, as well as receiving contributions of money from donors. This will help eliminate the petty tradition of begging in the name of religion.

Money from donors should only be spent on welfare activities. So-called loksevi lose much of their credibility in society by the misuse of charity funds for private gain. If the disciplines stated above are followed this can easily be avoided, and the smooth functioning of the organization will be sustained without hampering its authenticity. Transparency and accuracy in financial transactions are the keys to maintaining credibility in today's materialistic society, and they should be practiced religiously.



Epilogue

The Parting Sentiments of Pujya Gurudev

Pujya Gurudev revealed in a January 1969 Akhand Jyoti editorial that he would depart from Mathura to begin a new chapter in his life. The following excerpts from Pujya Gurudev's announcement are a reminder of his deep affection for us even today. From this wellspring of emotion, sadhaks can experience a great feeling of intimacy with him. Those who accept this immense love as his legacy will find themselves able to bring divinity into their own lives.

I am approaching my sixtieth birthday. On that date my worldly activities will come to an end. A little more than two years remain for me to bring my worldly affairs to a close. I am not sure what I will be doing after that, but I know that I will not be able to continue a physical connection with the common people.

I am not making this extraordinary and difficult decision of my own volition. I am powerless in the

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matter. Every thought and action has been controlled by an entity which is with me every moment.

A puppeteer puts on a show, but the audience feels that everything is done by the puppet. In reality, the puppet is merely an instrument. I have never done anything according to my own wishes. I am a puppet in my Guru's hands and have been carrying out everything as he has directed.

My heart aches when I try to imagine the future and compare it with my past. If I could show you my heart, all you would see is love. I have spent my entire life working for this love. I feel entire world is my own and I have a great love for all. For those with whom I have had a chance to become emotionally attached, this love is limitless.

I have read many books about knowledge and renunciation. I have heard many lectures on the futility of worldly attachment. They all say the world is an illusion; that everyone works only for their own selfish purpose.

I have heard discussions of *Brahma* and have even repeated these words to others. But now I feel that it is better simply to accept my own weakness, the weakness of not having fully accepted any of the knowledge I have preached. This world seems very real and its people my own. When my own soul dances among these people, how can I turn away? Who can one leave? How can one forget those who cannot forget him?

I do not understand anything, and the knowledge I have learned does nothing. These questions keep me awake at night and constantly echo in my head. I am reminded of the never ending sequence of loving images of those who have become my own, I love each one more than the last; I am closer to each than the last, I want

to care for each more than the last. Why am I being wrenched from this heaven? Where am I being taken? How can I leave these people? How can I live without them? I do not understand anything. Tears flood, and my pillow is wet every night.

I can barely understand my present mental state. It may seem like the nightmare of an ignorant person unable to break free of worldly attachments and fearful of impending trials. But it is not. I have already passed beyond fear and cowardice. There is no room for worldly pleasures when one's life is about to end. I am far past the age for such things. The biggest obstacle I now face is my own aged body.

With this in mind, worldly desire is not what is causing my ordeal. The cause is my own heart, brimming over with love, making me restless with it, restless to repay a thousand times over every individual who has given me even a little bit of this love. I want to repay again and again every cent to those who have helped me.

I do not want what people call heaven or emancipation, but I do ask that God give me one more birth in the 8.4 million cycles, so that I may pay back every bit of love I have received. It may be as a tree, cow, flower, or sheep, even grass, anything; but I must repay the ones who have loved me. I am too obliged by their good wishes to accept any additional burden. If only I could become a cloud of love, and pour a shower of love on everyone who gave me the slightest affection. These kind individuals should know their love is never forgotten; it will always be remembered.

Still, there is no soothing my aching heart. How will this pain end? But in these moments of anxiety, I open my heart to my parijans. I want them to know what I think, what I want, before I say goodbye.

Every feeling grows stronger as the day of farewell approaches. I long to stay close to the ones I have loved for so long. There was so much talk of coming and going, but I had not imagined how painful it would be when it actually came. I will not hide; I will reveal everything – the choking anguish, the painful feelings – so that my heart's load will be lightened and the parijans will also know the reality. I do not know if I will ever write an autobiography, but this emotional turmoil will at least shed some light on this aspect of human nature.

People have perceived me to be a scholar, an ascetic, a philosopher, a genius, and so much more. I have always seen myself as an insignificant human being with a very compassionate, emotional, and loving nature.

I have never heard of such loss in the dealings of love. Why has it come to me? Why do I feel this loss? I was never prepared for this separation. I never knew that love's sweetness would turn this bitter at the time of parting. I have both spoken on and read much about the philosophy of love; distance does not matter in love, it is not bound by any physical body or place. But now, I see that it is difficult for a person to understand this, no matter what their level of knowledge may be. And even my own spiritual development seems to be lacking in this matter.

It is very difficult to leave with the debt of affection from kind people still behind me. Sometimes I feel that it would have been better for me to have gone into solitude right after my birth never to experience such a burden.

I have often dreamed about what I will do for the ones I love, but what I have actually been able to offer them is so insignificant that I feel ashamed of it.

I wish I could give everything I have left to the ones who have given me any bit of their affection. I thought of so much, I wish I could give everything I have to the ones who have given me any bit of their affection. I dreamt of doing so much – that I would give this to this one, that I would do that for the other one – but what I actually gave was nothing, and my heart is heavy because of it. I wish I could give everything I have to them; I would bow at their feet and tell them that this is all that I can offer them right now, and promise that I will return in another birth to repay them in full.

We as humans are often unaware of what is good for us due to our lack of far-sight – and thus we remain attached to the world and ignorant of true happiness. But the power in me, which is my Guru, does know. And I intend to do the right thing for us, for our families, and for the entire world.

No matter how I try to tell myself otherwise, it has already been decided that I will leave for this penance within two and a half years. It seems like a small death, the ultimate farewell, but it is comforting to know that it is not.

We may not be able to meet in person, but our bond will remain as it is, and will actually strengthen for those who wish to maintain it. I leave you with this satisfaction.

My mental state has assumed an exceptional level, and I will do my best to keep it that way. Compassion and love fill every corner of my heart, it is so lovely that I will not part from these feelings at any cost.

Salvation, to me, has always been freedom from greed and desires. I have attained this and have enjoyed what I see as heaven: a life based on high moral standards, a focus on the good in others, and a love for

all as strong as the love one holds for the self. I hold no desire to go to some other heaven or achieve salvation.

My prayers pour out from the divine presence and expand to every individual. I experience each of them as a part of my own soul, a part of my own body; a part to be treated with respect and reverence. Only an extremely ungrateful person could think of turning away from such people.

It is not bread, but the sustenance of affection which has kept me alive wherever I have gone. Life is filled with struggle, and it is only this love that has enabled me to survive, and to succeed.

I may be forgotten, but I will not forget any who ever loved me. I may go too far for the eye to see, but no one is beyond the vision of my soul. Whoever sees me with love and devotion in his heart I will keep them in my soul and carry them with me wherever I go. I will make the offering of my tears on these deities of life.

The condition of my heart is that of a mother who must leave her children, she turns back again and again, hugs them, feels the surge of affection in her heart, and cries as she takes her leave. I feel I have not loved each one of you enough. I may not be able to bestow any boons or blessings, but I can hold everyone close to me, and fully express my love.

Something wrings my heart at the thought of parting, and my throat becomes choked with sadness. And yet, this does not make me helpless. I am proud that I am giving myself up to a great cause: The welfare of all, the new creation of the world.

Love, love, and love; this has been my only *mantra*. Love, affection, compassion, and unwavering faith; these have been my only prayer.

So in the days that remain I will not only tell everything that must be told, I will be giving all the love I can to those whom I consider a part of myself. Perhaps this will help the parijans as well.

This stream of emotion from me will continue unceasingly, with no expectations and with no compensation from my parijans. Some may forget my parting gift to them, but I will continue to cherish their memories as long as there is memory in my mind and emotion in my heart.

I want to let everyone know that although I may have no possessions I will always have a heart filled with love and affection for those who have given me the slightest of love and care. I will think of the long happy times we have spent together laughing and loving each other. This parting seems as heartbreaking as the separation of a cow from its calf. Sometimes I feel like I cannot bear the burden of this separation and will break down.

This heartbreak at the thought of parting may be a human weakness to those who have absolute knowledge. And I am willing to accept this, as I consider myself an ordinary human being, and have never professed to be a *yogi*.

I have spent my entire life in love, in loving, and in teaching others to love. It has been the business of my life to buy love at any cost and to sell it at the lowest possible rate. It would have made no sense to make a record of loss and gain.

Death is still far away, but what I fear is life – a life that will continue on without the love and togetherness of being among you, and to which I have become so accustomed. I feel like a fish that has been told to live without water after swimming happily in a pond of love for all its life.

I have gained support from a great number of people who have contributed time, hard work, and money. And far greater in number are those who have simply given me the love and faith that has made my life possible. In reality, it is their love which has allowed me to survive the hardships of my life.

All our lives we bow before idols of stone and metal that provide no tangible gifts. Why not kneel before these living gods who sustain our lives with their shower of affection?

I do not have the courage that I can leave in the night, in silence, telling no one of my plans. My asceticism has not reached that level yet. Consider this as you will, either as fortunate or unfortunate.

Breaking out in tears when hugging old friends and remembering the moments spent playing and working together may seem humiliating, but it lightens the heart. This is exactly how I feel these days. For true sages such emotion may be shameful, but I have not yet attained their level.

I pray that people may learn to love: to give their love freely to themselves, to their lives; and to their families, society, and God. To feel that love in return is truly the sign of a successful life.

It has become my disposition that my heart naturally longs to give love a thousandfold in return to those who have given me even a single grain of affection. I would like to say that I will reciprocate all faith, respect, affection, and love anyone has felt or in the future will feel towards me.

I will not turn my back on them. In some way, I will keep my bond strong with all these people, even after I am gone.

To Those Who are Part of Me

For you to read and contemplate every day:

With the help of my pen, these fingers of mine express my heartfelt feelings. But what I write cannot be achieved by material things like this paper, pen or my fingers. The responsibility to realize it lies with all of you: awakened souls and disciples, who are devoted to the mission of global enlightenment.

This mission has been inspired by divine will and being written down through my fingers. Every part of me is trying to find a way to bring it about. I envision countless awakened souls who will bear this responsibility, sharing their time, resources, and efforts both visibly and invisibly. This paper, this pen, and these fingers may perish, but the work they have initiated will not stop. Every drop of my blood, every breath of my life, and every impulse of my mind is devoted to this noble cause. It is the flow of the eternal divine force, acting subtly to bring about the dawn of a bright era.

The scope of this mission is immense; it is as vast as its name suggests – "Transformation of the Era." A great number of elevated souls will collectively accomplish this epochal task from the invisible domains, even if the credit may go to a few active on visible fronts. You may also become one of these, if you respond to this call of time.

Think back on what our mission has achieved so far and what it will continue to achieve. What will happen in the future will be even greater than that. Most of it will be done by you, each of whom are like parts of my own body, reflections of my own existence. It is the collective power of all of you that makes up the man who is writing these lines.

How will these seemingly impossible goals be achieved? Where will the resources come from? Do not worry. The one who has entrusted us with the responsibility will take care of all this. The only thing you should be aware of is whether you are putting in the best of your efforts. None of you should lack dedication for our noble mission.

Hanuman's ability was insignificant in terms of resources, talents, and education. He was only an assistant to the dethroned *King Sugreev*. But the moment he devoted himself to *Sri Ram's* mission, he could attain success in astonishing tasks, such as crossing the ocean, uprooting a mountain, and destroying the mighty kingdom of *Lanka*. He also received the honor of having *Sri Ram* and *Lakshman* sit on his shoulders. I expect each of you to be like *Hanuman* in devotion, discipline, and duty.

The tasks you must complete will be given to you from here in Shantikunj, the headquarters of our mission. These tasks may keep changing, and so will your level of success at them. You must remain unflinchingly sincere in carrying out your assigned duties, and take care that your sentiment of devotion, with which you had joined us, should not wane or weaken. It should continue to grow with each day that passes.

Understand the great dimensions of the tasks ahead. Be assured that if you have tried as hard as you can, without distraction, then even if you do not succeed, your efforts will be considered unique and historic. It is true that immense support and potential are required

for such grand plans. But leave all of this to the divine force that has laid the foundation for this mission. You must only worry about how to make better use of your time, abilities, and talents. Whether the work is to your liking or not, strive to find ways in which you can contribute to its completion. Think about how much greater responsibility you can bear, how you can move faster towards your goal despite unfavorable circumstances.

Be vigilant with regards to your habits. You should always be making progress in refining your personality and character. Watch your thoughts and actions carefully, identifying the weaknesses you and your colleagues can see. Identify any indiscipline in your routine. Are your work habits at the whim of fatigue, or other such excuses? Do not allow your selfish desires, lethargy, or lust for comfort to distract you from the path of ideals; do not think of stopping the work at hand.

Frustration and arrogance are the most dangerous enemies of an altruist. You must keep a safe distance from both. Failure or success—neither is under your control. Failure should only give you a chance to pursue introspection and improve your efforts. Remember that this is putting your abilities and faith through a trial by fire. You must face every obstacle with courage. You must also help extend the faith and potential of your peers.

Great success should only help you understand how far your virtuous efforts and sincerity can take you. It may boost your faith in your chosen path, but it should not trigger your ego. If you are able to achieve something, humbly feel grateful for the opportunity. Have self-confidence, but do not regard yourself as above anyone. This is the kind of mentality you must have.

Our mission's role will expand greatly in the years to come. Your preparation for this should be exemplary. Your endeavors must

endow your inner self with grace, and your devotion must keep the guiding force close to your soul. This is what enabled *Hanuman* to be a part of the *Ram Panchayat*.

The glorious accomplishments of our mission in the years to come are certain. In the present phase, the Almighty has bestowed upon certain people the chance to work at the vanguard of this. You are among those people. This is a crucial trial by fire of your participation. Take care that on no front, physical or mental, should you fall. In this critical time, you should not lose faith or stray from the chosen path. None should be lost or separate from the mission, or they will regret this forever. Only after ages do deserving souls receive an opportunity to join such a mission, so do not miss your chance or you might regret later.

Great people achieve great goals. One does not become great through any type of physical possession. Rather, the virtues of his personality are what make him great. Our goals are in sight, and your own greatness should not fall short. It is with this expectation, hope, and confidence in you that we proceed towards the higher realms.

These words from Pujya Gurudev, written during the Sukshmikaran sadhana, convey his guidance to those who have dedicated themselves to his mission. They are also guidelines for those who wish to follow the path of lokseva.



Glossary

- Abhimanyu* : in the Mahabharat, the son of Arjun who attained glory riding into an inescapable formation during the battle at Kurukshetra.
- Acharya* : a presiding teacher figure.
- Akhand Jyoti* : a biweekly magazine published by Shantikunj in Haridwar.
- Alexander* : the Greek king whose invasion of India was overthrown after *Chandragupt* founded the Maurya Empire in 321 BCE.
- Ambapali* : a royal courtesan of the republic of Vaishali whose life was transformed after meeting Lord Buddha.
- Angulimaal* : a violent decoit (thug) who was transformed after meeting the Buddha.
- Apno Se Apni Baat* : “My Words to My Own,” a column in *Akhand Jyoti*.
- Ahiravan* : *the brother of Ravan in the Ramayan.*
- Arjun* : one of the five Pandav brothers in the Mahabharat, a warrior-prince who received Krishna's teaching in the Bhagwad Gita.
- Arvind, Maharishi* : Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1871-1950), an Indian independence leader and one of the great seer-sages.
- Ashok* : a king of ancient India who, after witnessing the wartime massacre he had caused in the kingdom of Kalinga, became a Buddhist and took an oath of peace and nonviolence.
- Ashram* : a refuge usually founded and maintained by a *guru* and his followers.
- Ayodhya* : a city in the ancient kingdom of Koshala that is considered to be the birthplace of Rama.
- Bhakti yogi* : a person who chooses devotion as his path to salvation.

- Bharat* : the second brother of Ram in the Ramayan.
- Bhikshatan* : the practice of begging for everything, even basic supplies.
- Brahma* : the Hindu concept of the Creator of the universe; one of the Hindu trinity of gods.
- Brahmin* : historically a name for the most religious of the four traditional Hindu castes, and the only caste which was permitted to practice religious rituals and use the sacred texts. Gurudev, however, defines a Brahmin as anyone who follows a virtuous lifestyle of discipline and giving.
- Brij* : a region in Northern India where Krishna is said to have spent his childhood.
- Chakravyuh* : in the Mahabharat, the inescapable military formation in which Abhimanyu, the son of Arjun, was trapped.
- Chanakya* : a political theorist and professor at the ancient Takshshila University, but best known for his vital role as advisor to Emperor Chandragupt Maurya.
- Chandragupt* : a beloved ruler of the Mauryan empire.
- Devmata* : an epithet for Mother Gayatri. It means “The Mother of the Gods.”
- Dhoti* : a simple, long piece of cloth worn as a sort of loincloth by Indian males.
- Diksha* : an initiation ceremony.
- Dipa Yagya* : a condensed form of a yagya in which small lamps are lit instead of a central fire.
- Dronacharya* : the royal guru of Kaurav and Pandav, who later became the arms master in the Kaurav army in the war of Mahabharat.
- Duryodhan* : *in the Mahabharat*, the eldest son of the blind king Dhritarashtra, who desperately wanted to usurp the throne from Yudhisthir, the eldest son of King Pandu.

- Eklavya* : *in the Mahabharat*, an archery student who considered Dronacharya his guru, and when asked to give *dakshina* (tribute) to him, cut off his right thumb in dedication.
- Gandhiji* : Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948).
- Gayatri* : the protector of vital life force (*prana*) personified as the Goddess of wisdom and pure intelligence.
- Gayatri Mata* : *the representation of Gayatri as the Divine Mother.*
- Gayatri Mantra* : the mantra associated with the power of the sun, asking for intellect and discerning judgment.
- Gayatri Pariwar* : an organization founded by Gurudev, which runs like a family, and is devoted to the cultural, ethical, moral and spiritual awakening of the world. It is comprised of millions of people from around the world and from all walks of life who aim to bring about a transformation of society by changing themselves.
- Genghis Khan* : the thirteenth century founder of the Mongol Empire.
- Gopalkrishan Gokhale* : (Gokhale, Gopal Krishna, 1866-1915) a leader of the Indian independence movement and eventually a member of Congress.
- Govardhan mountain* : the sacred hill near Vrindavan that Krishna lifted on his little finger to shield the people of from Indra's thunderstorm.
- Granth Sahib* : the sacred text of Sikhism.
- Guru* : a spiritual guide or teacher, either physically present or in spirit. There not be any single guru for a given person, nor need the guru be an actual person. A guru can take also take the form of a book, object in nature, or symbol.
- Guru Arjun Dev* : the fifth Guru of Sikhism.
- Guru Ashram* : see *Ashram*.
- Gurudev* : affectionate name for Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya (1911-1990), the author of this book.

- Guru-Diksha* : a ceremony in which one accepts something or someone as his guru or guiding principle.
- Gurudwara* : the Sikh place of worship.
- Gyan yogi* : a person who chooses the path of wisdom as his path to salvation.
- Hanuman* : in the Ramayan, a *vanara* (a monkey-like being) whose tribe came to the aid of Ram during his capture of Lanka. Hanuman is known for his unswerving dedication to Ram, Lakshman, and Sita.
- Haridwar* : historically one of the holiest sites in India for Hindus, and the city in which Shantikunj is located.
- Hiranyakashyap* : a demon king who considered himself the ruler of the Universe.
- Indra* : the ruler of heaven *in early Vedic mythology* who conquers the forces of darkness with his thunderbolt.
- Janak* : *in the Ramayan*, the father of Sita.
- Jap* : *the* concentrated repetition of a mantra, often while counting the beads on a mala.
- Jarasandh* : the king of Magadha in the Mahabharat.
- Kagawa, Toyohiko* : (1888-1960) Japanese pacifist and activist for social rights and moral principles for poor and working class citizens. His philosophy of nonviolence was similar to Gandhi's.
- Kaikayi* : *in the Ramayan*, one of the queens of Ayodhya and the stepmother of Ram. To ensure that her own son Bharat was guaranteed the throne after the king died, she had crown prince Ram exiled from the kingdom.
- Kalash Yatra* : a procession, usually before the yagya, where women carry holy water in special pots called Kalash on their heads to signify purity in life.

- Karm Yogi* : a person who chooses the path of work as his path to salvation.
- Kans* : a tyrant king of Mathura and maternal uncle of Krishna.
- Kauravs* : a Yadav dynasty, the primary antagonists in the Mahabharat war.
- Kerala* : a state in northern India.
- Krishna* : the eighth avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu who appears in the Bhagwad Gita as the charioteer and advisor of Arjun in the war of Mahabharat.
- Kumbhakaran* : in the Ramayan, the brother of King Ravan of Lanka.
- Kund* : *a basin or pit for the consecrated fire, the small altar at which a yagya ceremony is performed.*
- Kundiya yagya* : refers to the number of kunds in a yagya.
- Lanka* : in the Ramayan, the kingdom of Ravan.
- Lokseva* : *giving wholehearted, sincere social service to the world.*
- Loksevi* : *one who gives wholehearted, sincere social service to the world. From “loka” (world) and “seva” (wholehearted, sincere social service).*
- Mahabharat* : the longest of the sacred Hindu epics, and the one in which the Bhagwad Gita is found.
- Maharishi* : a Sanskrit honorific meaning “great seer,” a title bestowed upon a sage who is at an advanced stage of learning and practice.
- Maharishi Arvind* : *see Arvind, Maharishi.*
- Maharishi Vyas* : *see Vyas, Maharishi.*
- Mahatma* : a Sanskrit honorific meaning “great soul.”
- Mala* : a string of beads, used like a rosary, to facilitate a state of concentration on a mantra. The beads may be made of various types of wood or precious stones.
- Mandalas* : a small local group.

- Manthara* : in the Ramayan, the maid who convinced Kaikeyi that the throne belonged to Kaikeyi's son Bharat and that her stepson, crown prince Ram, should be exiled from the kingdom.
- Mantra* : a set of syllables with great potency in their sound, vibrations, and meaning.
- Marich* : in the Ramayan, a member of Ravan's court who plays an important role in the abduction of Sita by transforming himself into a golden deer.
- Mashal* : the red torch emblem of the Gayatri Pariwar, symbolizing the unity and collective power to bring about a bright future.
- Mata* : mother.
- Mataji* : affectionate name for Bhagwati Devi Sharma, the wife of Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya.
- Mathura* : a city in northern India, and the birthplace of Krishna.
- Mirabai* : the sixteenth century Indian poetess and great devotee of Krishna who composed several songs and hymns in his praise.
- Mughal dynasty* : a Muslim empire that ruled most of the Indian subcontinent during the sixteenth century and, with declining power after early seventeenth and until the mid-eighteenth century.
- Nabush* : a king of the Tripuri dynasty.
- Napoleon* : (Napoleon Bonaparte, 1769-1821) a French military and political leader.
- Nasiruddin* : a king of Avadh in the early eighteenth century.
- Pavanar Ashram* : *the ashram of Vinoba Bhave.*
- Pandavs* : a Yadav dynasty, and the primary protagonists in the epic Mahabharat.
- Parijan* : a member the Gayatri Pariwar.
- Pariwar* : a family

<i>Peeth</i>	:	a center.
<i>Pragya Mission</i>	:	Gurudev's mission for global change.
<i>Pragya Parijan</i>	:	a person working towards Gurudev's goals for the Pragya Mission.
<i>Prahlad</i>	:	a mythical prince who, in spite of his demonic father's opposition, was so devoted to Vishnu that the god himself supposedly emerged from a pillar to protect him.
<i>Puja</i>	:	a Sanskrit honorific.
<i>Purnahuti</i>	:	final round of offerings in yagya ceremony.
<i>Rajasuya Yagya</i>	:	a grand yagya.
<i>Ram</i>	:	the hero of the epic Ramayan, crown prince and eventual king of Ayodhya, and considered by most Hindus to be the seventh incarnation of Vishnu.
<i>Ramayan</i>	:	one of the sacred Hindu epics, which tells the story of an ideal ruler and his quest to rescue his kidnapped wife.
<i>Ramdas, Guru</i>	:	the fourth Guru of Sikhism.
<i>Ram Panchayat</i>	:	the counsel of Lord Ram.
<i>Ram Shastri</i>	:	a chief justice in Indian court.
<i>Ramtirth, Swami</i>	:	a great Hindu sage.
<i>RSS</i>	:	acronym for Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers' Organization), a charitable organization of volunteers in India.
<i>Ravan</i>	:	the king of Lanka who kidnapped Ram's wife Sita.
<i>Rupee</i>	:	the national currency of India.
<i>Sabarmati Ashram</i>	:	Gandhi's ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati River.
<i>Sadhak</i>	:	a person who attempts to bring discipline into his or her life.
<i>Sadhana</i>	:	the practice of integrating discipline into one's life.
<i>Seva</i>	:	wholehearted, sincere social service.

- Shantikunj* : the ashram of the Gayatri Pariwar, founded by Gurudev in Haridwar, Uttarakhand.
- Shiva* : the Hindu concept of the Destroyer, one of the Hindu trinity of gods.
- Sikhism* : a religion founded in northern India in the fifteenth century by Guru Nanak which follows the teachings of the ten Sikh gurus and has its own scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Sita* : the wife of Ram in the epic Ramayan.
- Sugreev* : the king of the Vanaras, the monkey tribe in the epic Ramayan.
- Sukshmikaran sadhana*: *the spiritual discipline of* sublimating the vital force and physical, mental and spiritual energies.
- Sun meditation* : a form of meditation in which a person sits silently and concentrates on the sun, aiming to absorb some of its divine energy.
- Surpanakha* : a character in the Ramayan who attempted to seduce Ram, causing him to cut off her nose and disfigure her.
- Swami* : a Sanskrit honorific given to one who has attained a great deal of learning.
- Tapa* : *a spiritual discipline of* austerity, penance and sacrifice.
- Tulsidas, Goswami* : a sixteenth century Indian poet and philosopher whose most famous poem is *Ramacaritamansa*, “The Lake of the Deeds of Rama,” also known as the *Tulsi-krita Ramayana*.
- Uttar Pradesh* : a state in northern India.
- Vadodara* : *a large city in the Indian state of Gujarat.*
- Vandaniya Mataji* : *Used to address affection and respect for Mataji – Gurudev's wife.*
- Vedmata* : an epithet for Mother Gayatri, the Hindu concept of knowledge and power visualized as a goddess. It means “The Mother of the Vedas.”
- Vibhishan* : the brother of Ravan, the king of Lanka in the epic Ramayan.

- Vidyasagar,*
Ishwarchandra : (1820-1891) a great Indian scholar and reformer who fought against the social evils of child marriage and exploitation of women.
- Vinoba* : (Vinoba Bhave, 1895-1982) a widely venerated disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, and one of India's best-known social reformers, founder of the Bhudan Yagya or land-gift movement.
- Visarjan* : taking leave of the deity.
- Vyas, Maharishi* : one of the great Hindu sages, considered to be the author of Mahabharat.
- Yadav dynasty* : the dynasty of Lord Krishna.
- Yagya* : a selfless sacrificing for noble purposes. The ritual of yagya involves group ceremony where offerings are made to a central fire and people are encouraged to consider their lives and habits.
- Yagyacharya* : the presiding priest of a yagya ceremony.
- Yogi* : a person who has obtained knowledge of one of the yogas, or paths, outlined in the Gita and has taken steps to implement them in his life.
- Yudhishthir* : *the eldest of the five Pandav brothers in the Mahabharat.*
- Yug Nieman Yojna* : Gurudev's mission for the creation of a new era.