

Today's talk focuses on gratitude and selfless service, or *Seva*, as a path to abundance. *Seva* is a core practice in both Hindu and Jain traditions. Hinduism teaches that devotion, gratitude, and service are essential for realizing our oneness with the divine. Jainism emphasizes nonviolence and service as means to purify the soul. In both traditions, *Seva* begins with gratitude for what we have and blossoms into a desire to give back. *Seva* is more than a duty; it's a spiritual journey that allows us to experience the abundance of giving from the heart.

During the Bengal famine of 1943, a proud widow, despite having nothing, refused to beg or accept charity. The Ramakrishna Mission workers approached her respectfully, teaching her gratitude and *Seva* and encouraging her to focus on what little she still had. With newfound gratitude, she used her skills to cook for others. This story shows that *Seva* doesn't just help those in need; it elevates the giver, arising from a profound gratitude for the ability to help.

*Seva* is selfless service infused with gratitude. It involves acting with kindness, respect, and profound peace and love. *Seva* transforms both the giver and receiver. It is a way to connect deeply with what we have and who we are, seeing service as an act of thankfulness.

Selfless service has challenges, time constraints, fear of exploitation, and the ego asking, "*What's in it for me?*" These are natural. However, beginning from a place of gratitude makes it easier to overcome these challenges. When we appreciate our blessings, our desire to serve others grows. *Seva* becomes a natural extension of our gratitude.

Swami Vivekananda, inspired by his master Sri Ramakrishna, saw serving humanity as serving God. During the 1898 plague in Calcutta, the Ramakrishna Mission chose to stay and help when many fled. They nursed the sick, cleaned streets, and provided care—all from a deep gratitude. Vivekananda taught that "*They alone live who live for others,*" showing that true abundance lies in selfless service.

Swami Vivekananda's words, "*They alone live who live for others,*" remind us that:

- **The True Purpose of Life is to serve others.**  
Gratitude motivates us to share our gifts and to find deep meaning. We connect to our divine essence when we live in gratitude and service.
- **Serving others Transforms Our Ego.**  
The ego, or our attachment to "*I*" and "*mine,*" is a significant barrier to spiritual growth. *Seva* helps dissolve this ego by fostering gratitude. When we appreciate all we have received, we become less focused on ownership and more willing to share. *Seva* opens us to greater gratitude.
- **When we serve others, we serve the Divine.** (Practical Vedanta)  
Practical Vedanta, as taught by Vivekananda, views all beings as divine. When we serve others, we serve the Divine within them. This philosophy stems from recognizing our interconnectedness and expressing it through gratitude-driven action. *Seva* is a pure form of this expression.

- **Service to others is the path to Spiritual Growth.**

Selfless service is one of the fastest routes to spiritual growth. By serving others, we move beyond our limited identities and experience the expansion of consciousness. *Seva* and abundance reinforce each other, helping us grow spiritually and connect more deeply to the divine.

### **Personal Reflection and Gratitude Exercise**

Reflect on what this spiritual path means to you and how it has brought meaning to your life. Reflect on the blessings of living on Maui or wherever you live. Consider the beauty, the community, and your experiences there. When we feel grateful for these blessings, we naturally desire to serve others.

### **Practical Steps to *Seva***

Here are a few simple ways to bring *Seva* into your daily life:

- **Start Small:** Dedicate weekly time to help someone—listening, volunteering, or helping a neighbor.
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Be fully present in each act of service and feel gratitude for the opportunity.
- **Let Go of Expectations:** True giving expects nothing in return.
- **Look for Opportunities Daily:** Every small action matters—helping with groceries, sharing kind words, supporting local causes—all of it is *Seva*.
- **Look for Opportunities to Serve on Maui** (or wherever you live.)
- **Serve our Unity on Maui Community?** In what ways can you serve our Unity Community? Do you have a gift to share? Can you lead a book study? Create a social event. Could you help us spread the word about Unity? A group of us are meeting to discuss what Unity on Maui can be and where we are going as a ministry. Are you interested in joining in on the conversation?

### **Challenge for the Week:**

I challenge you to commit to one act of *Seva* this week. Help a neighbor, volunteer, or be there for someone in need. Do it with an open heart and notice the gratitude that fills you.

During the Bengal famine, the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission walked miles with food and medicine for remote villages. They acted not for recognition but out of love and gratitude for their well-being and the opportunity to help. This legacy continues today, reminding us that *Seva* starts with gratitude and transforms lives.

*Affirmation: I open my heart to serve others and live abundantly.*