

46. The human raft

MAN is the victim of many a pain; to those who identify themselves with body, life is a series of trouble and misery. But to those who know that the body is but a vehicle, these cannot cause anxiety. I must emphasise this now, when I am inaugurating this Primary Health Centre. Bodily health is important, for ill-health affects mental poise and concentration. When the body is fit, mental functions too run smooth; when the body suffers, the mind too gets unsettled. So, this raft called body which is the only means of getting across the sea of *samsaara* (worldly life), has to be kept in good trim.

Untruth, injustice, anxiety---all cause leaks and loosen the knots of the raft. With such a poor raft, it is foolish to attempt the crossing. The raft has to be cast aside when the crossing has been effected; there is no more use for it. The human raft is the most efficient, for it is built out of *viveka*, *vichakshana* and *vairaagya* (discrimination, ability and non-attachment), hard timber that can stand the beat of wave and the sway of current. If one does not make the best use of this chance, it may not come again for a long long time.

Devotion and morality are as important for physical health as they are for mental health. They free the mind from agitation, they feed it with joy and contentment; they quieten the nerves and help even bodily processes. The flowers of this garland were buds yesterday; they bloomed this morning; they have started to fade now and tomorrow they will rot and dry. But, the string that holds them together interpenetrating them, is not subject to such change; It was string yesterday, it is string now and it will be string tomorrow. The unchanging *Aathma* and the changing body---analyse them thus and be convinced of the eternal universal core of your being. As a thinking, discriminating human being, it is your responsibility to discharge this duty to yourself. And also to your country! For, India deserved the honour of the "World Teacher" because her people always insisted on this great responsibility and tried to discharge it. But, when Indians neglected this and attached value to physical comfort and social status, the land fell into the morass of competitive struggle.

Treat your family as a sacred trust

Now, man encased in rockets takes pride in zooming round the world at terrible speeds and even racing to the moon; but he has not succeeded in penetrating even an inch into the innermost recess of his own mind and controlling the vagaries rampant there. To save yourself from being carded away by the current of change, you must swim up the river, which is a hard enterprising process, indeed.

Hold all your property and wealth in trust for the Lord who gave them to you; even your family, you must treat as a sacred trust, as persons given to you by the Lord to love, foster and guide. Thus, you must elevate your attachment into worship and make it an instrument for spiritual progress.

Minister Balaraami Reddy expressed his wish that this Health Centre, named after Velugota Venkataraja Gopaal Krishna Yachendhra, should prosper from year to year. But a hospital's progress is to be judged, not by the number of patients coming for treatment. It must educate the people around in the principles of health and see that the area is freed from disease. And among the means to ensure health, spiritual discipline is the most important

Let your love flow towards all

You should not be ever entangled in the meshes of this world and its problems. Try to escape into the purer air of the spirit as often as you can, taking the name of the Lord on your tongue. Of the 24 hours of the day, have 6 hours for your individual needs, 6 hours for the service of others, 6 hours for sleep and 6 for dwelling in the Presence of the Lord. Those six hours will endow you with the strength of steel.

Gopaalakrishna Yachendhra, the Chairman, described the green fields that surround the villages and declared that there is nothing so congenial to happiness as village life. Villages are the backbone of the nation. Cities pant for the contentment and joy of villages. Cities are lost in *confusion*, noise and selfish fury. The ryots who till the soil and feed the people are indeed holy men, who help their brothers and sisters in their dire need. They bear hard *toil*, silently and gladly. But you need not feel small. Be like gods and you can partake of *Amritha* (nectar), as the gods did once. If you are like *Asuras* (demons), you can have no share in the Divine Nectar.

Let your love flow towards all; you have love but, now, it is distributed selfishly and sparingly. Or at least, do not hate other people and talk ill of them or seek to estimate their faults. Do not feel sad or hurt when others are happy; try to share their happiness and be happy yourself, when those around you are. Your speech has to be soft and sweet; do not imitate the roar of the lion or the hiss of the serpent. In a village where everybody knows everyone else and where living is so intimate and interdependent, this kind of sweet talk, motivated by love, is essential. The tongue is now the sharpest weapon in the armoury of the villager, it ruins many homes, it divides brothers and neighbours; it does more havoc than a bomb!

Let not pests of greed spoil the harvest of plenty

This Health Centre will become efficient if villagers appreciate its service and co-operate with these doctors and if you do not frustrate its efforts by wrangling among yourselves. Develop love and co-operation; then villages can thrive. Otherwise, even the best of intentions on the part of the Venkatagiri Royal Family or Government Agencies will be frustrated. The presence of the Minister and of the President of the Samithi here is a sign that they will do their best for you; it now lies with you whether you will make the best use of the help that they so readily grant. If you do that, I know, the Venkatagiri Royal Family will be really happy.

I have to tell you something more about this Health Centre. The Malayaala Swaami who made this place famous and popular by establishing his *Aashram* and School was desirous that a hospital should be added to the amenities of this village. Now that this Centre is inaugurated, his wish has been fulfilled. Let not the pests of anger, lust and greed spoil the harvest of plenty that you seek through your earnestness and steadiness. Do not use your hands to harm or injure another, use them rather to beat time, when you recite the Names of the Lord, Names which are redolent with His Glory. That is my advice to you today.

Yerpedu, 14-12-1964