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DR. D.L.N. MURTI RAO ORATION

IN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

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Mr. President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply conscious of the honour which has been conferred upon me by our Society in selecting me for the D.L.N. Murti Rao Oration Award.

I had the privilege of meeting the late Dr. Murti Rao for the first time in 1956 when I visited Bangalore on an official tour from Poona. I was greatly impressed with his clinical acumen, teaching ability, popularity among his students, honesty of purpose, personal humility and professional courtesy. Unfortunately, he was snatched away from us by an untimely and premature demise on the last day of the year 1962. I take this opportunity of paying my homage to this distinguished son of our Nation.

I am also reminded of having been fortunate enough to have been called upon to deliver the first ever Oration at the time of the Nineteenth annual conference held at Panjim (Goa) in January 1967, as the winner of the first Sandoz Award. The title of my oration then was "Morale of Indian troops during Indo-Pakistan Conflict, 1965", which was of topical interest 16 years ago. Now, having past the age of three score years and ten, I have chosen a philosophical topic, i.e., "In Pursuit of happiness", which appears to be of topical interest at present, particularly to persons of my age group. You would probably recall that one of my distinguished predecessors, Dr. Venkoba Rao, chose "Gita and Mental Sciences" in 1980 as the title of his oration. This fact encouraged me to select the present title. Let me now review the subject under discussion.

Every human being wants to be happy and healthy and is prepared to do everything in this power to attain this objective. What is required for this goal is a harmonious working of the three aspects of human life, i.e., the body, the mind and the soul, so as to ensure a positive health in the real sense of the word. To keep the body healthy, one can adopt means such as a balanced diet, comfortable housing and fresh air, suitable clothing, adequate sleep and regular physical exercise. Good physical health is a sine qua non for the mental health of an individual, but some other measures are also essential, such as: job satisfaction, an interesting hobby or spare time activity, and recreation. When we consider the welfare of the soul, we have necessity to think of the Creator and the means which the human race has followed in the different parts of the world for the Unity of the soul with Him. This brings us to the subject of Religion.

RELIGION AND ITS FUNCTION

The most striking feature of religion is its universality. The perpetuation of many religions throughout the world is a sufficient proof of man's attempt to influence social behaviour in the right direction. Religion constitutes a form of social discipline (Caprio, 1957). The more productive forms of religion assist a person to develop his specifically human...

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capacity to reason, to live and work productively, reaching to a new level of harmony with himself and others (Fromm, 1964). Freud (1964) accepted the idea that religion satisfied primitive needs of man, and that it projects against anxiety generated by the feeling of helplessness vis-à-vis the powerful forces of nature and that it offers the assurance that one is protected by a truly eternal parent.

THE PRIEST AND THE PHYSICIAN

The first Kingdoms and empires were founded in Asia and in Egypt around 4000 B.C. This brought in an advent of new type of social organisation of administrative system and of religion with colleges of Priests and elaborate rituals. At first the priest was given the combined role of ministering to the needs of the soul and of healing the bodily ailments. Gradually the two functions separated and a separate group of physicians appeared on the scene. But the demarcation was not very sharp. For many centuries the priest and the physician lived side by side. IMHOTEP in Egypt was born around 3000 B.C. Numerous wonderful cases were reported at his shrines.

FAITH CURES

Again, as late as at the end of the last century Charcot wrote a paper on “Faith healing” in which he stated that he had seen patients cured at Lourdes after medical treatment had failed and concluded the existence of some unknown powerful healing agents (Quoted by Ellefkerger, 1975). According to KIEVE (1972), the healing power of Lourdes or of a Catholic confession is of much higher order than of the average psychotherapist for neurotics.

PHYSICIAN AND HIS REMEDIES

Students of the history of medicine realize that the remedial measures used by the physician until recent times, except in very rare instances, were in most instances pharmacologically inert. The question naturally arises how did such remedies brought about a symptomatic relief. The answer is that the relief was the result of a placebo effect and that the faith in the physician was the most important therapeutic agent (Kirpal Singh, 1964). According to Houston (1938), the physician himself was the therapeutic agent. The importance of faith in promoting a symptomatic relief is also supported by the denial of the rational efficacy of any treatment or medicine by the members of the Christian Science group, who do not use any medicinal remedies and assign all treatment benefits to faith. Faith healing practices are also common to a number of Christian denominations (Pattison et al., 1973). One group oriented form of faith healing is practised by many American fundamentalist
Protestant congregations. This is based on an injunction in the New Testament:

"Is there any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer of faith shall save the sick" (James 5:14, 15). Healing for both physical and emotional disorders reportedly occurs at the end of such a scheduled church service (Nes and Wintrob, 1981).

RELIGION AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Venkoba Rao (1976, 1978, 1980), giving an example of Reactive depression, stated that the way to overcome it could be found in the Gita. Feelings of guilt appear almost invariably in cases of depression. Religion provides a number of methods of alleviating guilt e.g., confession, prayer, acts of good work. It can, however, intensify sense of guilt in some cases (Ostow, 1975). The function of a clergyman includes pastoral counselling i.e., assisting the individual members of his congregation to deal with serious problems, either reality problems or problems that he cannot resolve alone and that may cause anguish and damage. The important role of a psychiatrist in the prevention and treatment of psychiatric illnesses is to ensure happiness and it is justifiable to use any rightful means to achieve this objective.

MY EXPERIENCE

Basing my remarks on my long clinical experience as a psychiatrist, and without confusing the audience with technical jargon, such as Ego, Super ego and Id or Oedipus complex, castration complex, Penis envy etc. I would like to say that following factors play an important role in the aetiology of most neurotic conditions, in (1) Fear; (2) Frustration with regard to basic urges and feeling of being unwanted and unloved; (3) Feeling of inadequacy, inferiority and lack of self-confidence; (4) Inter-personal maladjustment; (5) Jealousy; (5) Feeling of guilt; (7) Feeling of helplessness in this competitive society with regard to procuring a job and/or promotion; (8) Economic reasons—inaibility to provide basic material needs to oneself and one's family; (9) Chronic ill-health; (10) Social causes, such as the Caste System and the practice of dowry; (11) abuse of alcohol and drugs.

DAILY FRUSTRATIONS AND ROLE OF PRAYER IN BOOSTING MORALE

It can be easily seen that in the modern times the achievement of one's legitimate goals is extremely uncertain, especially when it is believed that corruption and nepotism being so rampant, an individual without the support of a powerful person cannot make much headway. It is therefore, abundantly clear that at least for psychological reasons a firm belief in the existence of an Almighty Father who is depicted to love and protect his creation at all times, is a necessity as a morale boosting measure and adds to one's self-confidence. Prayer to such an Omnipotent Creator is therefore an extremely effective measure to combat many of the causes of a nervous breakdown and to restore mental health in those who are already affected. Such a practice forms a very useful form of Psychotherapy.

In the practice of medicine, psychotherapy is the only tool peculiar to the discipline of Psychiatry, because the psychotropic drugs which it prescribes are also used by other disciplines. But psychotherapy in some form is also practiced by all physicians, e.g., a doctor when he listens to a patient's history, examines him, explains to him about the nature of his ailment and reassures him,
is actively practising psychotherapy. It is known that psychotherapy was practised in ancient times by the Greek priests in Aesculapian temple and was an integral part of religion (Castelnuovo-Tedesco, 1976). Similarly the ancient Hindu priests were also using psychotherapy in their pursuit of healing.

In the beginning of my professional career as a psychiatrist and for many years thereafter, I was careful not to include religion in psychotherapy, as I thought that a psychiatrist should be strictly neutral in such matters and should not impose his religious views on his patient or even appear to do so. But I slowly realised that an average Indian patient (unlike his counterpart in the West), expects his doctor to assume a more active and authoritarian role and tell him clearly what to do and what not to do in all aspects of his life.

During the last ten years or so, I have found the following method to be most useful, as a part of psychotherapy, to expedite the recovery of patients who consult me for neurotic symptoms.

After listening to the patient's history carefully which also includes his attitude to religion and carrying out a detailed examination, an assessment is made and he is reassured and asked to start the treatment—usually consisting of appropriate medication plus a suitable form of once a week session of psychotherapy, with a short prayer in the following lines:

“I am starting this treatment, my Almighty Father, with the confidence that with your help and kindness I will soon get better and will ultimately be cured of my illness. The doctor who is treating me has assured me that I will be better soon and I find no reason why with your kindness I should not recover. Kindly help me, my Lord.”

I also tell my patient that the short prayer should be repeated daily with the modification that whatever positive points are noticed from day to day should be added and stressed in the prayer, e.g., “With your kindness I am feeling better now and I am sleeping better or I can concentrate better and/or I am not as depressed as before. I am most thankful to you my dear Almighty Father and am confident that with your continued help I will be cured soon”.

INGREDIENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PRAYER

Before asking the patient to pray on these lines, I stress upon the patient the ingredients of a successful prayer, viz.

(a) A firm faith in the existence and ever-presence of God.
(b) A strong belief that He loves us.
(c) A faith in His Omnipotence and capacity to grant all of our wishes.
(d) That what one is praying for is a rightful request.

(Raghbir Singh Bir)

In rare cases, when it is revealed in the history taking that the patient under treatment is a non-believer, he is not asked to pray.

CLINICAL IMPRESSIONS

My clinical impression is that the patients who have a strong faith in God and who pray regularly, as suggested above, recover more quickly than those who do not believe in the efficacy of prayer and depend solely on medicines. Besides the patients I see in my private consulting practice, I attend Guru Harkrishan Hospital, at the famous historical Gurdwara Banglasahib, New Delhi once a week and see psychiatric outpatients there. Again, my impression is that those coming to Gurdwara Banglasahib, having a greater faith, tend to improve more rapidly than those seen in private practice and that
the improvement in the sceptics is slower and not so long lasting.

The above procedure for use of prayer in psychotherapy was employed in almost all patients irrespective of their religion. The results reported above are based on my clinical impression in treating about 600 patients. A controlled experiment was carried out by a postgraduate student at Amritsar under the guidance of Professor Harcharan Singh (Singh et al, 1979) which indicated that regular recitation of SUKHMANI SAHIB—a portion of the Sikh scriptures, benefited patients suffering from essential hypertension.

USE OF QUOTATIONS FROM SCRIPTURES

Unlike the late saintly and devoted Dr. Vidya Sagar who regularly prescribed recitation of some specified portions of religious scriptures like the Gita and Sukhmani Sahib to his Hindu and Sikh clients respectively, as an aid to psychotherapy (Personal communication, 1973), I have restricted such a practice to my Sikh patients alone, as I have not had an opportunity to study the Gita or any other relevant Hindu sacred books. In a few selected Sikh patients, in whom the faith had been completely shaken on account of some overwhelming precipitating factors and resulted in a severe mental disturbance, I tried to re-inculcate faith in God in the patient by reciting some of the following quotations from Gurbani:

QUOTATIONS FROM GURBANI

The selection of these passages from Gurbani are based on what inspired me from time to time reading Shri Guru Granth Sahib and therefore are entirely subjective and not as a result of any learned research.

The page references are from the Guru Granth Sahib. The original text is given in the Roman Script, followed by its meaning in paranthesis. The Guru Granth Sahib contains not only the compositions of the Sikh Gurus but also selected sayings of some Hindu, Muslim and low caste Saints.

EFFICACY OF PRAYER

Page 91—

"Kita Loriay Kam So Har Peh Akheyeye Karaj De Sawar Satgur Sach Sakheye" (Whenever you need anything, Pray to Him. He will set right all your work, the Guru is witness to this)

Page 590 Pauri

"Har Ike Data Seweye Har Ik Dhiyaey Har Ike Data manguye man Chindeya Paiye" (One should serve and meditate upon only one Supreme Being and pray only to Him for whatever one wants)

Page 187 Rag Gauri Mohalla 5

"Tis oopar mun Kar tu Assa Aad Jugad Jaka Bharwasa" (You should place all your hopes on the One Supreme Being who can be depended upon in all ages)

Page 182 Gauri Gurari Mohalla 5

"Kauh Benti Apne Satgur Pah Kaj Tumhare De Nibahe" (Whenever you need anything, humbly request your Satguru for it, He will help to complete your work)

Page 88 Rag Ramkali Mohalla 5

"Jisse Sahae hoiy Bhagwan Anak Jatan Takey Saranjam" (Whosoever has the help of God, all his efforts meet with success)

Page 281

From Sukhmani Sahib 14th Ashtpadi

"Manukh Ki Tek Birthi Sahb Jan Dewan Kau Ekey Bhagwan" (It is useless to depend on human help, The Supreme Being is the only one who can give everything)
Page 276 Sukhmani Sahib 11th Ashriyadi
"Karn Karan Prahb Ek Hai Dusar Nahin Kooy,
Nanak Tis Basharney Jal Thal Mailyal Soy"
(There is no one except God who can do everything, Say: Nanak let us praise Him who is present on the land, water and in the intervening space)

Page 293 Sukhmani Sahib, 23rd Ashriyadi
"Nirbhau Japay Sagal Bhau Mithay Prahb Kirpa Te Pranty Chhootey"
(One who meditates on the Fearless One all his fears disappear, By His grace such a person gets emancipation)

Page 327 Sukhmani Sahib 18th Ashriyadi
"Bhu Chuka Nirbhau Hoie Basy
Sagal Bhau man Te Khath rasay"
(By meditating on Him all your fears will disappear and your mind will be free from all disease and discomfort)

Page 521 Pauri
"Aradho Sacha Soi Sab Kichh Jis Pas
Dhak Sirnam Khasam aap Khin meh Kar
Ras Tiago Sagal upav Tis Ki out Ghaub
Pun Samai bhaj Sukhi Hun Sukh Lath"
(Meditate on that True Being who has everything. He is the master of both ends. He can set right everything in fraction of a second.
Give up all other efforts, take His shelter.
His shelter and meditation on His name will give you all comforts and happiness).

ANXILTY AND FEAR

Anxiety and fear are experienced by everyone under a stressful situation. But one who meditates upon and prays to the Almighty soon overcomes these emotions and is not overwhelmed by them.

Page 932 (Dakhni Onkar) Mohalla I
(Guru Nanak)
"Chintai Hi Disey Sabh Koie
Chetey Ek Tahi Sukh Hoie"
(Everyone is worried and unhappy, only he will be happy who remembers the One Supreme Being)

Page 267 Sukhmani Sahib 18th Ashriyadi
"Bhu Chuka Nirbhau Hoie Basy
Sagal Bhau man Te Khath rasay"
(All your fears will disappear and your mind will be free from all disease and discomfort)

Page 1371—Bhagat Kabir—
"Kabir, Kran so bhaiyo jo kino Kartar
Tis bin doosar ko nahin, Eko Sirjanhar"
(Kabir says only that cause comes into effect which is created by the Almighty. There is no one else who counts except the One Supreme Being)

Page 523 Salok Moh. 5
"Sab Kichh Karte hath Karan jo Karai
Nanak mangai dan santon dhoor taraiy"
(Everything is in the hands of the Creator and He can create any cause, Nanak prays for the dust of the feet of His saints for his own emancipation).

ENVY AND JEALOUSY

Anyone who harbours ill feelings for others is himself unhappy.
Guru Arjan Dev therefore gives the following advice:

"Par ka bura na rakhe cheet
Tum ko dukh nahi bhai meet."
(Do not harbour any ill feeling against others. If you follow this advice you will not have any unhappiness).

RESULTS

I have found the results of the above methods of including prayers and recitation of Sikh Scriptures as parts of psychotherapy in the treatment of emotionally disturbed patients, as encouraging.

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