



'Today is a gift, that is why it is called The Present.'

It will take just 37 seconds to read this and change your thinking..

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation..

Every afternoon, when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake.

Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every colour and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite details, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine this pic-

turesque scene.

One warm afternoon, the man by the window described a parade passing by.

Although the other man could not hear the band - he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days, weeks and months passed.

One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep.

She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside.... He strained to slowly turn to look out the window besides the bed.

It faced a blank wall.. !!

The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window.

The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall.

She said, 'Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you.'

Epilogue:

There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy.

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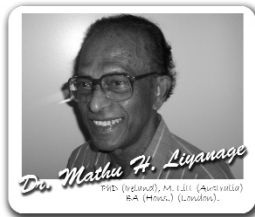


Social Work
a nourishing agent for Rural Development in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, as in most developing countries, there is confusion in the minds of the hierarchy in government departments, welfare agencies and the general public about the difference between 'Social services' and 'Social work'.

Social services is the provision of services to meet the basic needs of an individual such as food, clothing and shelter and other services geared towards this end by providing material aid whereas social work focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of an individual and provides him/her support to sort them out in order to realize his/her potential and become a self-reliant, self-confident and a productive person in the community. It is really self-actualization - to turn potentiality to actuality. The person becomes the best he/she can be.

This mentality on the part of the successive governments in Sri Lanka forced most of the officers professionally qualified in social work to seek employment in other countries such as USA, UK and Australia. Those who did not possess qualifications equivalent to a degree in social work were unfortunately left out. Even the Ceylon School of Social Work in the 1960s and 1970s produced only diploma-holders with a 2-year diploma certificate. This fell far too short as other countries insisted on a degree in social work or equivalent qualifications. For instance, Australia insisted that the qualifications should be approved by the Australian Association of Social Workers to migrate to Australia.



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It is laudable that the government of Sri Lanka established the National Institute of Social Development (NISD) in 1992- the premier institution of higher learning in social work education, training and research. The University Grants Commission recognized it as a degree awarding institution in Sri Lanka. The primary aim of NISD is to produce professional social workers to service the social welfare system by enhancing human resources for social development.

The Ceylon School of Social Work, which comes under the umbrella of NISD, now conducts a:
2-year Diploma program in social work,
4-year Bachelor of Arts program in social work, and
2-year Master of Social Work degree program.

This is a highly commendable proposition as it gives recognition to social work as a profession in Sri Lanka and facilitates the movement of social workers among other countries for work or post-graduate training.

Sri Lanka is predominantly an agricultural country with an agriculture-based economy. About 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. The incidence of poverty is high in the rural sector compared with the urban and estate sectors. Poverty in Sri Lanka is mainly a rural phenomenon, the rural sector accounting for about four to fifths of aggregate poverty according to the

Department of Census and Statistics survey, 1990-91. It is heartening to note that the World Bank's Sri Lanka Director Naoko Ishii, in a recent communiqué, commended the rural poverty alleviation program 'Gemi Diriya' in empowering the poor and raising incomes in some poorer provinces such as Uva, Southern and Sabaragamuwa. It has financed 2,140 community infrastructure sub-projects, generated about 18,500 jobs and provided livelihood activities to 140,000 households. It has also proved highly successful in transferring control over decision-making and financial resources to rural communities.

Nevertheless, the incidence of poverty prevailing in rural areas speaks loudly for the upliftment of agriculture and agrarian services. President Mahinda Rajapakse was quite right when he recently declared that Sri Lanka should develop its agriculture-based economy in preference to industrialization favoured by the Western countries. He believes that, once the agriculture based economy is well-developed, other industries and trades would follow on the heels of the improved and sustainable agricultural economy.

To give effect to this far-sighted thinking, it is essential that officers with social work qualifications should be involved in projects at grass root levels. They are equipped to execute programs of development than any other as they have learnt the theories and techniques of working with individuals, groups and communities, including leadership roles. This might also enable them to realize their own potentials by involving themselves in rural developmental projects. In the course of their duties, they may well be in a position to suggest or recommend who should really be able to maintain and sustain such projects without allowing them to lapse into inaction or decay, as has been the case in the past.

Needless to say that correct planning, organization and execution of rural projects with socially-biased skillful workers at grass root levels can make a tremendous contribution to realize the government mission to make Sri Lanka a model country with an agriculture based economy to surpass or be on a par with other countries that opt for industrialization.

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Kids
HORIZON



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