Tackling Tension



Hazrat Dr. Zahurul Hassan Sharib Gudri Shah

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Persons desirous of obtaining information about the Society and getting past lectures may please contact our representatives in Europe;—

Holland. –
Mr. Mohammed Siraj
Mimosastraat, 11,
Zwyndrecht,
Holland.

England:—
Mr. Faiz Ahmed,
109, Windsor Road,
Forest Gate,
London E. 7. U K.
Tel. 01-471-7670

Tackling Tension

I invite you again to share the sweet smell of Beauty's rose. The gifts of unthrifty loveliness are free. Let us share them among ourselves.

I feel happy and jubilant that we have come close together once again. Community of interest, mutual love and regard and concern for each other constitute the silken cords binding us together. We share the same outlook. We hold firmly and tenaciously the same ideas and ideals and fundamental convictions about life and its problems.

We, as members of The Society of Mystics are guided by common aspirations, dreams and devotions and a common sense of obligations.

We stand for human brotherhood and individual dignity and for the growth and dignity of human personality.

We have to remember that we have to discharge our duties and our obligations under any circumstance, even in the tough and tumble, pressure and stress and storms besetting modern life.

It is unfortunate that we have not as yet been able to give a new orientation to the classes and the masses, and have made no definite contribution to make their life happy, jolly and gay. The mystics have, in the past, by their precept, personal example and practice, changed the tenor of life of the people. They freed them to a great extent from inner conflict, tension, worry and anxiety.

Life is a voyage on an occean, and we are the floating vessels upon this vast ocean. A little negligence or a littte carelessness will no doubt drown us. Let us follow then the law of this ocean so that we may save ourselves from being wiped out or drowned.

People find themselves in disgrace with fortune. They moan and they groan. Life to them is a fitful fever. Instead of finding a cure, treatment or solution, they want to sleep, never to get up again.

Man's anxieties and fears have landed him in a position, where he has to strive and struggle, not only with himself, but against the environment, in which, he lives and moves.

We have seen and heard people saying :

I am worried.
I am anxious.
I am not happy.
Life has no charm for me.
I have my own problems which defy solution,
To me life is a burden.
Cares and worries have robbed me of happiness.

Man is not meant to be a victim of adverse circumstances. According to Epictetus ;—

"If a man is unhappy,
this must be his own fault,
for God made all men to be happy"

It is true that we are prone to melancholy. Omar Khayyam

in one of his quatrains laments:—

"We sojourn here for one short day or so,
And all the gain we get, is grief and woe,
And then, leaving life's problems all unsolved
And harassed by regrets we have to go."

Tension has now become a universal phenomenon. Maladjustment of life is a common human experience. Life has become a constant struggle against the environment, both internal and external.

Tension is an emtional state, which is both unpleasant and apprehensive. It has become a common disease. Millions of prescriptions are dispensed for psycho-tropic drugs to combat tension.

People differ, of course, in their tension proneness. Hereditary endowment plays a great part. Discipline, training, self-control and the nervous system are equally the determining factors.

The present age has been termed as an "Age of Anxiety". The politician, the philosopher, the psychiatrist and the psychologist peer into the mist, and wonder what the end of man on earth will be. Anxiety and tension have now come to occupy a prominent place in the vocabulary of everyday life, and thus, it is a new concept and a new phenomenon. It is a product of the modern competitive age with its concomittants of insecurity, poltical upheaval, social disorganisation, economic crises, rapid change in the social set up, leading to swift and sure birth of new ideas and values.

Tension and anxiety are the twins, having connection

with the higher nervous system function. Anxiety may be either active or passive In the case of passive anxiety, there is slow breathing and a slow heartbeat, but in active anxiety, there is faster breathing, a swift heartbeat and an increased muscle tension.

Tension is infectious. In Persian, there is an aphorism which says;—

"*A sad heart makes others sad*".

Tension may be due to environmental factors. Inherited factors play a prominent part in predisposition to tension, but the influence of environment cannot be ignored.

The difference between fear and tension is that fear is related to some object in the environment, but tension relates to inner factors Tension may be due to the loss of some bond of affection with another person, or the loss of a loved one. Danger of loss, suffering or the pain of mourning leads to a state of tension. It may also be due to a reaction to stress or fear reaction.

The mystics have viewed the state of human beings with sympathy. They have tried to console the afflicted man and to take him out of the whirlpool of misery. According to the mystics, man has invited misery by his own misdeeds,

A person should not be tense or terse but should be the reverse.

Men have refused to listen to the voice of truth. The human heart, which was originally an abode of peace, became disturbed and agitated like the surface of the sea under the action of a storm. His evil inclination landed him in a state of tension, anxiety and worry.

The avarice, lust, greed. desire, pride and pelf have brought misery upon mankind. They have lost respect for piety, faith and morality. Man was thus robbed of happiness. His innocence was snatched from him–the innocence, which was of great consequence, and was an invaluable pearl beyond all earthly evaluation.

The mystics firmly hold and believe that the state of tension leads to a spiritual shipwreck. The treasures of eternity are lost. What remains and is saved is worthless–idle tears, repugnant remorse, a sickly body, a damaged nervous system and a bruised heart,

Tranquility is undoubtedly the banquet of life. It confers upon us serenity, solemnity, sobriety and above all, grace abounding.

We have to learn a great deal from nature. Nature speaks but we do not hear. There are flowers so delicate and so beautiful giving a nice smell. Amongst flowers, the rose is considered the best But, there is a rose flower, that perishes in the garden.

As Gray says:—

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen.
And waste its, sweetness on the desert air."

There is yet another rose fwer that forms part of a garland, and the garland is round the neck of a bride or bridegroom. There is another rose flower, which is in the buttonhole of the king or some dignitary. And then, there is another rose flower, which is offered as a mark of respect, devotion and affection at the tomb of some saint.

In spite of the different types of treatment meted out to the rose flower it is contented with its lot. There are no shrieks. It gives smell to all persons. It is to all alike, hostile to none. This self composed state, the mystics say, has given it inner beauty. It has learnt to surrender itself.

Now, let us take another aspect of the rose. There is no rose flower without a thorn. Its thorns teach us that to achieve any great thing in life, it is necessary to undergo some sort of suffering and severity, Let us, then, be a little severe towards ourselves. Let us not be drawn by temptations.

The thorns of a rose point out the mortification which a person has to face in life. The thorns prevent the rose from being trampled underfoot or plucked easily by an unscrupulous person.

Likewise, our trials and tribulations protect us from temptations. They fortify us and give us added courage to face and overcome the trials and tribulations of life.

The rose blossoms and then fades away. It teaches us that earthly glory is short lived. Personal possesions are not going to last long. And personal beauty is a perishable possesion. And so its loss should not cause anxiety.

The perishable nature of a rose points to the shortness of life. The life of a rose is very short, and so is human life, fleeting and short. We must not then attach any importance to things which are not going to last. What is important is that we should try to be like the rose, giving smell to friends and foes, not caring the least how we are treated and where we are placed in life.

Tension is now a universal phenomenon. To combat if and to overcome it, many institutions and groups came into existence. Religion came to the rescue of the afflicted, sorry and sad and care-worn man. Tribal organisations were formed. Professional groups and caste groups tried to alleviate the suffering of the toiling and tumbling hnmanity,

The origin, formations, development and consolidation or various groups marked a step forward, towards the goal of achieving a good life and better living for an individual

The groups are of different types, having different objectives in mind. There are political groups, professional groups and familial groups and other groups.

The political group assigned the cause of man's tension to political systems. They demanded more rights for the people. They hold that the political system should be such that it may give security to life and property and it may protect their rights. According to the exponents of the political groups, participation of the people in the day to day administration is necessiary and imperative in order to save them from frustration. The muscles of democratic choice must be used with caution and care.

The economic group tenaciously holds and affirms that the cause of man's tension is economic exploitation. They want that exploitation should be replaced by co-operation According to this group, the economic condition of an individual determines for him his life.

In Persian there is an aphorism which says :—

"A precarious livelihod implies a confused heart."

Thus, the economic groups lay stress that the economic system should be reformed and economic institutions be re-organised, in order to enable them to perform effectively their duty of securing for an individual a rational standard of living, employment and a sense of security which may save him from being a victim of tension, fear, worry and anxiety.

The mystics have not been silent spectators, sitting on the fence and calculating the weather, watching the tragedy being shown on the screen of the world. They came out of their ivory tower to the rescue of man.

Their approach to the problem of human suffering is different and at variance from what others have suggested. Accoroding to them, happiness comes from within. They think that thought is a potent instrument of change. As a man thinks so he becomes They want to change the man from inside.

They assigned themselves the task of man making. They emphasised that desire, inglorious competitive spirit, and the desire to dominate others constitute the chief causes of man's tension, fear, worry and anxiety. It is true to say that :—

"We live in deeds not words; in thoughts not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial,
We should count time in heart throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels more deeply, acts the best."

Let the people co-operate with others in their efforts to achieve their own standards of value

People should have an aim in life. An aimless life is like drifting on a sea, not knowing where to land. It has been said

and said wisely :—

"Not grief nor pain, but lack of aim,
Leads mortals to despair".

The mystics recommend honest recreation, right use of leisure, a taste for literature, art and poetry, and a spirit of thankfulness. Let us then act in a way befitting the dignity of man :—

"When on life's billows,
You are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged,
Thinking all is lost,
Reckon up your blessings,
Count them one by one,
And it will surprise you
What the Lord has done"

To the mystics, joy and sorrow are like the two sides of a coin. Life without sorrow is a meaningless conception.

How can there be a sunshine without shadow ?

Can there be a rose without thorns ?

But a mystic is thankful that at least thorns have a beautiful flower. Sorrow is the lot of man and to subdue it requires the skill of man. Cowper gives this message :—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land, where sorrow is unknown".

Koran lays down thus:—

"So, verily,
With every difficulty
There is relief.

Verily, with every difficulty
There is relief."

Shelley shows the spirlt of optimism when he says:—

"The trumpet of a prophecy!O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind."

Man is responsible for his own suffering. If he is unhappy it is his own fault. Marcus Aurelius expresses his views on human destiny thus:—

"The gods have put all the means in man's power to enable him not to fall into real evils. Now that which does not make a man worse, how can it make his life worse."

According to Goethe :—

"Care worn man has in all ages
Sown vanity to reap despair."

Epictetus offers his own solution. He says :—

"I am always content with that which happens, for I think that what God chooses is better than what I choose".

The eminent mystic poet and Sufi saint, Hafiz of Shiraz, has a different solution to offer;—

"Bear with patience Hafiz, the hardships of night and day,
At last, thou shalt someday acheve they object in some way".

And he also suggests:—

"O Hafiz, from the autumnal winds in the
garden of the world, do not feel sorry and forlorn,
Think properly, where is the rose without a thorn".

The worry of Hamlet was of a strange type, from which so many people still suffer Hamlet in his spiritual agony utters:—

"O God, God,
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.
Fie on't ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature,
Possess it merely".

The greatest harm that tension. feat worry and anxiety cause is that they deprive an individual of concentation, inner harmony, inner joy, the spirit of thankfulness, and the power of making quick decsions, so very necessary in the modern world of swift changes.

According to the mystics the way to avoid tension, fear, worry and anxiety, is to follow and practise the following Code of Conduct Practise them one by one, and after you have mastered it, proceed to the next.

Learn to obey before you issue orders.

Avoid idle chatter and frivolous talk.

Pass some time in the fresh air.

Cultivate hobbies.

Do your work and leave the result to God.

See what you have become by hard work,
and not what you have got by hard work.

In times of stress, show patience.

Cultivate the spirit of toleration.

Expect nothing from people.

Have an ideal in life and pursue it vigouously.

Try to live in the present. The past is dead.
The future is still unborn Then why worry ?

Have fewer wants.

Concentrate on things that really matter.

Remember that forgiveness is power.

Avoid avarice and greed.

Cultivate taste for good society.

Have an optimistic outlook on life.

Perform your social obligations.

Realise that when days of happiness and affluence are gone, the hard time is not going to last very long.

Breathe slowly and rhythmically.

Let Courage be your sword and patience be your armour.

Avoid over excitement.

Abstain from revenge, malice, jealousy, rancour and ill-will.

Take every day as a new day, bringing to you a new message.

Pray and believe that your prayer is heard and accepted.

Praise others in public, and if you criticise them at all, do it in privacy.

Happiness also demands some sacrifice.

Make a concerted attack on your house, and try to turn it into a home-sweet home.

Live and let others live.

Do not magnify your worry or anxiety by thinking too much and too often on it. Ignore and forget it as long as you can and it will die out of itself.

Read good books and enjoy good poetry.

Cultivate the spirit of self surrender.

Take pain and pleasure as constituting the normal course of life.

Follow the rule:—

"Let one thing lead to another".

Love all, hate none.

Do servlce without the hope of reward.

Mutual competiton should give place to mutual co-operation.

The problem of worry should not be studied in a hurry or in isolation. An attempt should be made to overcome tension, fear, worry and anxiety by mystical cannons. A spiritual approach is required to face the problems offered by the Brave New World. To overcome them, do not run away and say "I cannot", but stay on and say with a smile,

"I CAN"; "I CAN".

Abstain, O abstain from tension, fear and dismay :
Look up, and see the broad light of the day ;
Take it as thy birthright to be jolly and gay,
Awake, and arise, and find the way

Dr. Z. H. Sharib



" ..... a mystic is thankful that at least
thorns have a beautiful flower".

Illustration:-Faiz Ahmed.