

SERVICE WITH A DIFFERENCE

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In this modern world, we are ready to work for others, more so, if the arc-lights are on. For gaining more publicity, we tend to toil under the sun or wet our feet in mud. If the returns are in gold, we would put the "service" up as an overcoat.

During a trip, I came across an ordinary man, a public servant by profession, but with some difference.

Can you understand the dilemma of a passenger who missed his train just by a few minutes? That was what I had to face while proceeding to join duty at a town, some thousands of kilometres away. To make matters worse, it was a weekly-once train to that destination. I knew that the delay would cost me my job and livelihood. I was distraught and perplexed, not knowing what to do next. Then, I remember, a tender voice fell into my ears: " I suppose you feel much worried. What happened? " His words had a ring of ethereal reassurance to which I clung. I told him the whole situation. After a while I found a new ticket in my hands, brought by him, though in a different route with two train change overs. I was unable to mask my eyes, filled with gratitude. He consoled me: " Now it's O.K., man. Please cheer up and get going."

Afterwards, each time I arrived at that station, I was curious to see him. Thus began a friendship. He deals with the general public with a cool and tender heart, thus standing out from the mechanical monotone of the common public servants. His face always shined with a heavenly charisma.

During his busy schedule, he always finds time regularly for seemingly silly a job. What is that? He told me that he gives his ears to others, namely, listens to others carefully. Such a service ? I suppressed my laughter, and would not have done so, if I had not begun to respect him by that time. Modest as he was, he was kindful to detail this activity only after my repeated requests.

There is a worldwide movement by people for preventing suicide, named "The samaritans", with as much as 400 branches in almost all the countries. Perhaps, the largest peoples' movement for suicide-prevention in the world. In India, this movement is called as "Befrienders India".

One who is unable to express suffocating feelings, accumulated for long by suppressing emotions, even to someone very intimate, can approach any of the Samaritan centres. There, a volunteer will be present to comfort you. Acceptable, caring, empathic and non-critical, the volunteer is there to listen you attentively and confidentiality is assured. His duty is to console you, by helping you to ventilate all your pent-up emotions and feelings, that had been hurting you. And their service is absolutely free.

Anybody who wants to become a volunteer in the Samaritan movement, can approach a centre and submit his bio-data. An interview will be arranged by the centre, for exploring all your aspects including your psychological and emotional plane. Subsequently you have to undergo an intensive training, on successful completion which you will be absorbed as a probationary volunteer.

A volunteer is committed by oath to keep confidentiality, all that is shared by a person seeking the centre' s service. He prefers to remain anonymous and does not advertise that he is a volunteer of such a centre. He will continue to be a volunteer only if he is ready to work the stipulated hours in the centre on the specified day, regularly.

My good friend had to disappoint me when I asked him to narrate some incident of saving someone from killing himself. I failed to shatter his oath, even by assuring him that I would keep it a secret. I wondered at his absolute commitment to the confidentiality of the persons he might have helped out. Such is the dedication of his mind to his duty.

"Are you confident that you can save everybody approaching you?" I asked. "When one chooses to approach a suicide prevention centre, it implies that he is in search of some means to escape from his suicidal feelings. Our duty is to strengthen his will to achieve his goal." he replied.

Now I respect him ten fold.

Nandu is a long time volunteer with Maithri.