

DESERT OF WRITING & FOUNTAIN OF THE WORD
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Recently I read some issues of a social monthly magazine “Catholic Samachar” and my controversial interview in one issue. Now when I am asked to write a short piece for a forthcoming issue I am reminded two couplets from a famous Gujarati poet Adil Mansoori. Here I give my English translation of the two Gujarati “Gazal” couplets.

“The desert of writing still continues to spread
How long will I go on carrying the weight of word?”

x x x

Where meaning is building a wall of darkness
How can business of word be carried out there?”

The poet expresses his terrible uneasiness because he sees the continuous spread of the desert of writing. The ‘desert’ in the poem could be a place of widespread sand or a field of war and hostile ground. He also sees that instead of building bridges and relationships our writing is building walls and divisions!

The couplets provoke us to ask ourselves, what do we do with our word and our writing? Are they a burden to our families and our human society? Do the business of our word and the business of our writing spread love and peace around us? Do our writings uphold the values and virtues like joy, compassion and forgiveness? Or do they spread the poison of hatred, ill will and enmity?

We have the power of words. We have the ability for readable writings. We have the medium of a monthly to promote our writings. But the basic question is how are we using our talents of writing and the medium to spread our words?

How are we carrying out the business of our word? As the poet says, are we building a wall of darkness with our talents of writing and with the medium of publishing a monthly magazine?

We take recourse to the story of a woman and a parrot to help us understand how exactly we are using our power of writing and the business of the print medium at our disposal. The story tells us also what is important in life.

The story below by Alan Smith is taken from Bishop Percival Fernandez’ book entitled “100 Motivating Anecdotes”.

“The story is told of a woman who bought a parrot to keep her company, but she returned it the next day. ‘This bird does not talk,’ she told the owner. ‘Does he have a mirror in his cage?’ he asked. ‘Parrots love mirrors. They see their reflection and start a conversation.’ The woman bought a mirror and left.

“The next day she returned. The bird still wasn’t talking. ‘How about a ladder? Parrots love ladders. A happy parrot is a talkative parrot.’ The woman bought a ladder and left. But the next

day, she was back. ‘Does your parrot have a swing? No? Well, that is the problem. Once he starts swinging, he will talk up a storm.’ The woman reluctantly bought a swing and left.

“When she walked into the store the next day, her countenance had changed. ‘The parrot died,’ she said. The pet store owner was shocked. ‘I am so sorry. Tell me, did he ever say anything before he died?’ ‘yes,’ said the woman, ‘in a weak voice, he asked me, ‘Don’t they sell any food at that pet store?’ “

For the parrot what is needed most is the food. Everything else is dispensable, but not food. But when the parrot gets only the dispensable things and no food, it dies without serving the purpose for which the woman had bought it! What a tragedy!

When we have the power of word and the talent of writing as well as a print medium at our disposal, we need to seriously examine how we use all these talents and the medium at our disposal.

Through our writings are we serving our readers with nourishing food? Are we helping our readers directly or indirectly to grow and develop by reading our writings and publications? Or are we using our writing abilities and the periodical at our disposal for simply building up our ego and spreading hatred of those whom we do not like? Are our means and our goals salutary and wholesome for our readers?

In our society as well as in our state the poor people are suffering terribly with price rise. The people below poverty line are struggling to earn a living. Then, we need to direct our talents and abilities to write and spread the word at the service of the poor people who are suffering economically, socially and politically.

The power of the word should not be used to build up one’s ego and spread the hatred of one’s enemies; on the contrary, ego and hatred should be banished. Only then our writings become a fountain of the words, inspiring people and not a desert of writing harming our readers. (Contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in & www.vpaulsj.org)

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