

THE QUIET HOUR

"ABIDE WITH ME"

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Many T.N.A.I. readers find themselves in lonely situations and while this page may help by providing a subject to think about for a few minutes, for a number of people find it difficult to maintain a "Quiet Ten Minutes" of devotional life. Scriptures form a basis for our personal meditation and worship, but may I suggest that a hymn book also comes in useful. It is not necessary to sing the hymns—that might be too much for our room mates or neighbours to suffer!—but it is good to think about the meaning of hymn; the experience of the writer, what he or she is putting into words. We can do this with any hymn, or a poem, but today, as an example, in this issue which is featuring the life of Mahatma Gandhiji, let us take one of his favourite hymns: 'Abide with me'.

A most impressive moment for thousands every year is the finale of Beating Retreat during Republic Day celebrations. As the westering sun sinks behind Rashtrapati Bhavan, and as ears and eyes have been feasted with precision music and marching by well-trained personnel, the long shadows begin to engulf the watching crowds, and both performers and spectators become aware that evening is drawing in. Even the birds begin to fly home, lazily flapping their way to roost oblivious to the pomp and ceremony below. And men's eyes go to the sky and the great wide vault of the heavens above, and across the magnificent man-made display God begins to draw his curtain. It is with this setting that we hear this hymn, shortly before the Last Post sounds and we remember those for whom the bugle has sounded for the last time; it is not only a sign:1 for "sleepy time" for us, but a reminder of those who sleep the last great sleep.

Abide with me ; fast falls the eventide ;
The darkness deepens ; Lord, with me abide !
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Travelling home by bus one evening a family prepared to alight, father taking his daughter's hand and mother following. With no sign of fear the little child followed her father once the bus had stopped, yet, as far as I could see, peering through the windows, there was a great deal of mud and darkness, a few small buildings but quite a lonely spot. For the child to have been set down there alone would have been a terrible thing, but because father was leading it was safe. So, at life's eventide, as one has to give a thought to 'getting off' from this busy world, it's a daunting thought to realise you have to do it *alone*. No one else can be with us at that time; none of our friends; not even our dearest ones can accompany us then; except it be the Father.

"Abide with me" is a request to a person, someone we already know. Who is standing in the unknown; unknown to us; that is, but known to Him. Therein lies our dilemma—and also our security. Friends have gone already; college chums; seniors we used to work with in the office; our revered teachers who seemed such fixtures in life's schedule. Now they are no longer with us, and our own recurring birthdays remind us that Time moves on relentlessly. We see lines of trees being planted these days; shall we ever see them fully grown?

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day ;
Earth's joys (which are very dear to us) grow dim ;
Its glories pass away ;
Change and decay in all around I see ;
(And once more comes this request to Someone
Who stands outside of Time and yet takes us by the hand
while we are in this world of Time and Space) O Thou who
changest not, abide with me".

It is NOW that we need to feel the grasp of His hand; if we do not know Him now, can we hope to meet Him then? If we cannot trust Him Now, what makes us suppose that we can rely upon Him being there in the beyond? And if He will surely be there beyond, is He not as surely with us today, while the sun is in the heavens; while we have light and the day is still with us?

"I need thy presence every passing hour ;
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power ?
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be ?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me".

Who is this tempter?—the one who accuses us, who makes us feel failures, who makes us aware of the wrong and presents it in such terms that we want it and will make every excuse to embrace it and call it our own. And it does become 'our own', this tendency to glorify ourselves, to want to be personally popular, to do what we fancy is going to be 'good' for us, even though we have to withdraw our hand from the hand of God to grasp some fleeting supposed advantage. And it leaves us clutching a wraith of cloud. To know one-

self held by Him Who does not change but Who is constant in His righteousness, this is the thing. It cannot depend upon our merit, for there is little to commend us. But if there be graciousness in the Unknown, then we have a chance;—even more than a chance, we can say 'a security'. If the Tempter takes our mind and affections off the Source of Life, then it is only Grace that can maintain the link and make it a lifeline to our soul.

The pressure of events, the need for wisdom, the problem of administration; frustration and ill-health and loss. If we bear these things alone, at best we have a varying compass for only Time will prove that we are moving in the right direction; at worst we know the blight that brings despair. But if it is possible to face not only the stresses of life but the finality of death with confidence, then here is real strength. But can this be possible?

"Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

The cross is a Christian symbol which has been adopted so widely because it represents the way in which Jesus Christ was put to death. It was a form of execution designed to cause the maximum of sufferings; and therefore, it not only stands for death but also for pain. That it should be regarded as a symbol of hope rather than horror is because God used it to declare His compassion for mankind. When death claimed in this way a sacrificial victim it met its Master. Suffering and Sin and death were shown to be no grim finalities, because through the resurrection we get a glimpse through the door of death and find God's light beyond. Because the cross was fashioned out of the sort of wood that we use for building our houses and was set in this world, we can find even in the symbol of the cross a reminder that when our eyelids close in 'that last sleep' of physical death, we are not stepping off alone into the vast unknown but that we sleep with our hand of faith held in the Father's gracious grasp, knowing that because He is life our only hope is to Abide with Him.

Mahatmaji favoured this hymn because he surely sensed the meaning it conveyed, and if his heart responded to the truth within it and found challenge and comfort, it will be well for us to meditate upon it, too.

OBITUARIES

With great sorrow we announce that Miss Thangachi Victoria, a third year student nurse of School of Nursing, Victoria Hospital, Bangalore has passed away on August 26 after a brief illness. Miss Victoria was good at her studies and practical work bearing exemplary character and was an active member of the SNA. May her soul rest in peace!



We regretfully announce the untimely demise of Miss Premani



Dass, 3rd year student nurse, School of Nursing, M.Y. Hospital, Indore on 14th July. She was suffering from acute Lukaemia and she died in Bilaspur at her home. We offer our heartfelt sympathies to relatives and friends.

Miss Winnie Scott, a very senior member of the Association, has passed away. She was invalid for the last 10 years. May her soul rest in peace.

CHANGE IN QUOTA OF VEHICLES FOR NURSES

The quota of Cars/Scooters to nurses under the scheme of priority allotment under the Public Utility Quota for the year 1975-76 has been further revised with effect from the quarter commencing from January 1976. According to the revised quota the Trained Nurses will be allotted 5 premier Padmini Cars, 5 Bajaj Scooters and 5 Lambretta Scooters. In addition to the above, 20 Vijai Delux Scooters, 10 Luna, 10 Suvega, and 10 Vicky Moped have also been included. This has been intimated by the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Civil Supplies recently.

Those members who had earlier applied and have not been allotted a Vehicle may like to consider changing their priority for a particular vehicle. Others who are still to submit their applications in this regard may note the changes as above and then give their priority for the vehicles.

Secretary