

All Life is Precious, **TOI** Including Your Own **15/2/06**

By CHAITANYA CHARAN DAS

The World Health Organisation reports that over one million people commit suicide every year. This figure is more than the total annual deaths reported due to wars and murders combined. WHO calls this disturbing global trend — of more people ending their lives — a tragic social health problem.

The number of suicide cases highlight the gross imbalance in material and spiritual values in contemporary society. Increasingly, people live for only worldly goals. Their entire sense of identity and self-worth comes from the pursuit and achievement of materialistic aims such as wealth, sensual pleasure, possessions and positions. This definition of success in terms of material achievements lies at the root of suicidal thought.

Why? Because people pursuing such goals will sooner, rather than later, be confronted with a situation where they will fail to gain or fear the failure to gain what they crave for. And similarly those who possess these things will be faced with situations where they lose or fear to lose what they live for. In such situations people become so identity-less and purpose-less that they feel life not worth living. And destroying one's very existence appears to be the only escape.

For example, a student who considers getting top grades to be his life's only goal will feel euphoric on becoming a topper. But he is equally prone to be devastated if he fails. If he thinks that marks are the be-all and end-all in life, he may well consider his life a disgraceful failure and decide to end it.

How can spirituality help in such a situation? Spiritual knowledge from the sacred scriptures helps us understand

our eternal identity as spiritual beings, beloved children of God. Spiritual practices like prayer, meditation and chanting of holy names help us experience the reality of God's love for us. Our life becomes motivated and directed by a glorious purpose: to use all our abilities and resources in the service of God and all His children, to thus revive our dormant love for God and to share that treasure of peace and joy with all living beings.

We become empowered by the conviction that even if everything goes wrong and everyone misunderstands us, still one person cares for us, understands us and stays unflinchingly with us at all times: God. Just as an intelligent child sees the love of the mother, not only in her pat, but



THE SPEAKING TREE

also in her slap, spirituality helps us to see God's love, not only in times of success, but also in times of failure. We see life not as a 100-metre sprint in pursuit of fleeting pleasures, but as a 100-kilometre marathon in pursuit of everlasting joy. Even amidst reversals, we see the road to eternal glory still beckoning us. Buoyed by the protecting and reassuring presence of God in our hearts and lives, we march confidently through the ups and downs of life.

Sociological surveys show that spiritually-minded people enjoy much better mental health than those who are materialistic. So as we pray for the souls of the unfortunate who ended their lives, let us also pray for the spiritual enlightenment of some others who may be veering towards a similar fate.

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