

“KOUSTHUBAM”

A Senior Citizens' Complex inaugurated by Pujya Swamiji at Coimbatore.

“In our tradition, there is the concept of ‘grihee bhutva vane bhavet’. After the grihasthasrama, they used to live outside the village in a wooden place. That is called vanam. It is a place where there are trees and plants. It does not mean going to a jungle. It is a stage in life which is spent japa and other forms of upasana in your daily life, and that is Vanaprastha ashram”, said Pujya Swamiji while inaugurating “Kousthubam”, the new senior citizens’ complex” at Somayampalayam, Vadavalli-Thudiyalur Road, Vadavalli, Coimbatore 641 041 on May 3, 12.

Sri A.V. Ramaswamy, who pioneered the senior citizens’ complexes ‘Vanaprastha’, ‘Dhyana-prastha’, ‘Sankara Seva Sadan’ and ‘Pyramid Complex’ in Vadavalli was again the force and inspiration behind “Kousthubam”.

In his welcome address, Sri Ramaswamy said the city of Coimbatore was becoming a city for the retired people. Besides our three or four complexes, such complexes for the senior citizens were coming up, and people were happy with all the arrangements. A long time back Pujya Swamiji and he had discussed about this subject of providing a good accommodation for the seniors—not like some old age homes but a place with all facilities for the people who could afford such facilities. That was the background for



starting these complexes. People who came and settled down in these complexes were happy and say this was the answer for the future generation of senior citizens. People who came and settled down in these places were happy and say this was the answer for the future generation of senior citizens. He for one had apprehensions about avatars but after the Satabishekam celebration at Codissia Hall, he could realize that Pujya Swamiji as an avatara and it was a privilege for him to get associated with him.

Sri Ramaswamy said they were having the privilege of having with them Dr. Krishna Kumar. After his taking over of the Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Ayurveda had spread all over the world and he had opened up new ayurveda hospitals outside Coimbatore also. Dr. Kuppaswamy who was with them on the occasion was not only a senior advocate but also a great social worker and a number of NGOs who sought help from him for delighted with his assistance. He says this he could do because of his association with Pujya Swamiji.

Pujya Swamiji, in his anugraha bhashan, said the city of Coimbatore was becoming a city for retired people and all the retired people preferred this city for the reasons that the city had a good





climate and good medical facilities were also available and cheaper than other places.

The concept of a Vanaprastha ashrama was there with Sri Ramaswamy and he wanted to provide a place for the retired people to live in peace and study Sastra. People's whole life was committed to earning money and raising family; it was a very engaging job to be a grahastha and it was not a simple one

In our tradition, Pujya Swamiji said, we have a very good concept of four stages in life. Firstly, for 12 years study goes on at the Gurukulam. In his 24th year, the student comes back home. He is 'snathah'. He has to become a grhastha. After coming home, he ought to earn money; pay Acharya gurudakshina and then he should marry and raise a family. After the married life, it had been said "grihee bhutva vane bhavet", meaning he ought to be out of his home and live outside the village in a place called 'vanam'. It did not mean going to a jungle. It is an attractive place where there were trees and plants. It became a stage in life when one spent his daily life in japa and other forms of upasana. That stage was said to be being in Vanaprasthaashram.

This stage was a lovely concept wherein people could have a small place where there was a like-minded community and food and other needs were taken care of. This was the best arrangement for a retired life. One could call himself a 'vane'.

Pujya Swamiji said: "This should be a kind of an ashram where you have the facility providing all that you require. Medical care is available. Here one should engage oneself in japa", he said. There is such a thing called purascharanam. Many of you were given

Gayatri or some other mantra. This gayatri mantra has 24 syllables, and for every syllable, one should do japa for a lakh of times. Japa, to be made, is 24 lakhs and you have to chant with a commitment. This is possible only in Vanaprastha ashram. It is not possible in Grihasthashrama. This is called purascharana. Everybody has to do it. . If you have not got a mantra, you must get a mantra from somebody and then do purascharana and one should lead a spiritual life. It is a great blessing. Let children be there wherever they are and you pray that all should live happily. You should be left alone for doing japa and live happily. This is vanaprastham".

We had the best retirement plan—vane bhutva pravrajeth. The best retirement plan is sanyasa, where you do not require anything. You required only 'pakwam' inside. You should stand under the sky and say 'I don't need anything'. Only we have this system; no other culture has it. We have the system of vane bhutva pravrajeth.

This Vanaprastha ashram is enough for us. Sarvakarma sanyasa is got by gyana only. Varna ashram dharmas are all designed to grow into a complete being. It is amazing. When you say 'I am in Vanaprastha', it may sound that my sons are not keeping me any more. They can come now and then and see you and go.

Concluding, Pujya Swamiji said: "stay here and spend more time in japa and study. There are people around who have read very well and who can take classes on our scriptures. I wish you all success for this great undertaking".



Dr. Krishnakumar, in his address said that Pujya Swamiji, in his anugraha bhashanam had enlightened and explained how all of you were fortunate to be in this beautiful home set apart for you. He said all would agree that the senior most youngster available in this hall was none other than Pujya Swamiji who had no retirement plan at all and went to every nook and corner of the world. In spite of the indifferent health, wherever there was need, he was there to bless. He said before coming to the venue here, he went to the temple and prayed that all seniors like you should have mana arogyam and sarira arogyam. He had brought a murthy of the Lord Dhanvantri and requested Pujya Swamiji to hand over to the Kousthubam complex. He appealed to the senior citizens assembled to pursue what Pujya Swamiji had advised in his 'anugraha bhashanam'.

Dhanvanthry murthy was handed over by Pujya Swamiji to AVR.

Dr. Kuppuswamy, in his address said, Pujya Swamiji explained in detail about the four ashramas in our tradition, and how people of Vanaprastha ashrama alone got a good opportunity to do what they should do in life. A Tamil Saint spoke of life in eight parts. In the first part, one played what he had not played, in the second eight, he learnt what he had not learnt, in the third eight, he went through married life, in the fourth eight, he brought up children, in the fifth eight, he went after the wealth he had not accumulated, in the sixth eight, he went around places he had not visited, in the seventh eight, he took rest he had not taken so far and in the eighth eight, he had to deal with the death he had not dealt before. In



a tree, a flower becomes a raw fruit and then becomes a fruit.

He said fruit only could be tasted and not the raw one. We were all in the stage of life which would give the best taste. If the fruit ripened, it would not stay on the tree; it would fall down. The fallen fruit should not be allowed to become rotten one. One's abilities should become useful to the society. Elders therefore said, paropakartham idamsareeram.

Saint Thirumoolar said we go to temple, see abhishekam and outside the temple, abhishekam would not go to the one who is outside the temple, standing and begging. If you go to him and give him food, it is seva. It is the walking temple. Bharathiar, said serving the downtrodden was yoga. Swamiji has been doing this. Aim for Seva is throughout India. Those who had to walk miles to go to school are given hostel accommodation. Similarly hospital becomes reachable for them. There are children's hostels and water is made to reach them. There are hospitals in places which could be reached by people in remote places. "Senior citizens could consider what can be done by them? They all held high positions; their knowledge and responsibilities could not be allowed to diminish. It would go rusting. For job there is a retirement age. But for doing service, there is no retirement. You can make open a service centre. Architects could give free advice. Doctors could give free advice. If you were a lawyer, you can give free legal advaioco, If you are an auditor, you can give your service. You can open a service centre open, you can do this for the village people around you", he said.