



A MAJOR ASIAN ISSUE – SLEEP!

Assembly 103 – July 24th 2003

We are looking at the saying that ends with ‘Walk beside me and be my friend.’ Today I want you to think about the importance of being friends with your BODY. Have you ever thought of that? – being friends with your body? What does your body need to keep going? Food, water, clothes and shelter - and SLEEP.

The father of one of our pupils is a doctor researching the serious problems of children who are too fat – this is a big problem in the rich world and among richer people in the poor world. Lots of people like sweet things and do not take any exercise. There is a lot of diabetes in Bangladesh and I have heard a doctor say that, if you take a lot of sugar and do not exercise, the sugar can build up in the body and increase the risk of diabetes. We need to take food with good vitamins, like vegetables and fruit. Some of you are very naughty about not eating your vegetables – yes? Some people, especially girls, want to be very thin, like the teenage models in some magazines and so they hardly eat at all. Some do not eat regularly. They eat nothing, or very little, for breakfast, sweets for tiffin and then a very large amount late at night. Many Bangladeshis have stomach problems because they eat such large meals, very spicy, late at night. Some of us do not DRINK enough and we can feel strange. If we do not eat and drink the right things, in the right quantities, at the right time, then our bodies are not happy. They cannot develop properly. They cannot work well for us. We do not feel well. We are tired. We cannot concentrate. We are not being friendly to our bodies.

We are also not friendly with our bodies if we do not let them have enough SLEEP. If your body and mine does not get enough

sleep, then we suffer. There was a very interesting article about this, on Tuesday, in the Daily Star. Do any of you take the Daily Star? Look at page 11 in Tuesday’s edition. Scientists have proved that, if children do not get enough sleep, their schoolwork suffers, their behaviour suffers and they are much more likely to have an accident. They had tests with children, taking one hour’s sleep away from them. These children made no progress or improvement in their studies compared to those who had a normal night’s sleep. In Italy, 300 children who went to hospital because they were hurt were asked how long they slept the night before the accident, compared to normal. They found that lack of sleep and increased risk of injury were connected. Children between 3 and 5 who did not have 10 hours of sleep were often hurting themselves, especially boys. Schoolchildren under 6 should be in bed by 8pm at the latest. About a third of the children that were tested were not getting enough sleep. I suspect that in Bangladesh, it is higher than that. But you go home early in the afternoon. If you want to stay up late, why not have 1 or 2 hours’ sleep in the afternoon?

The most important scientific discovery was that many of the children who are hyper-active, (jumping around all the time, not seeming to be sleepy at all) are suffering from sleep deprivation. Their parents just think they are active and do not need so much sleep and so they go to bed very late and they are jumping around all the evening, demanding a lot of attention. It is very important for you and your parents to help you to relax in the evening before you go to bed. Do not watch exciting television or play exciting video games. Make friends with your body and help it to unwind at the end of the day. Stroke your dog or cat, read a nice story book, look at nice pictures, talk nicely with your family and feel yourself getting sleepier and sleepier.

But the best test of all was one by an Israeli psychologist. He found that only ONE extra hour of sleep made a big difference to the memory and concentration span of schoolchildren. How many

of you can organize just one extra hour's sleep between now and the exams? Make friends with your body. Respect the God who designed your body! God bless you.



YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS!

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Not all ideas from the developed countries are good ones but the idea of Human Rights (*Manobodhikar*) – and especially Human Rights for children and women, have been totally accepted by the Bangladesh government and people in theory. Children have rights. And one of your rights is to your body. Let us go on thinking about making friends with your body. You have the right to say where your body is touched and how and by whom. Each of us have parts of our bodies which are especially private and no one should touch us there without our permission. You have the right to say NO if anyone touches you there when you do not want them to. I am not talking about ordinary fun and games of course or, indeed someone having to separate you from someone you are fighting with or having to discipline you. I am talking about private things.

Sometimes if you go to the doctors, the doctor has to touch your private parts but there should always be someone with you when the doctor does that so you know that it is all right. And if you are a girl, you can always ask to be seen by a lady doctor and sometimes that is possible. You have your rights and you have the right to say NO when someone touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. Shall we practice saying NO..... That is not loud enough! You must say it very firmly so that the person knows you are serious!Now stamp your foot when you say it! Good! It is good to give reasons for your NO so you can say,

“No. Do not do that. It is wrong and I do not like it!” It is OK for you to say that. You have your rights!

Now, there is another matter. You and I know that some secrets are very nice secrets. Maybe there is a family birthday coming up and you are planning a surprise and people say, “It is a secret. Shhh! Do not say anything. If you do, you will spoil our fun!” But some secrets are very bad secrets and you should never keep secrets about things that are wrong. Sometimes people do bad things and then hope you will not say anything. They say, “This is our little secret. You must not tell anyone.” Secrets can be used by bad people to stop them getting into trouble. But you do not have to keep such secrets. You can tell. You *must* tell. Because if something bad is happening, you have the right to tell, so that it stops – immediately! Tell someone whom you trust and tell it loud and clear and, if the bad things do not stop, you tell another person. You have the right to protect your own body from anyone who touches it in the wrong sort of way.

You are very precious. Your body is very important and private to you. Just because you are a child, or just because you are small, that does not mean that you have to suffer any bigger person touching you in any way you do not like. But again, I say, sometimes, if you have to be disciplined, people have to get hold of you, which you may not like!

And I say also to you older ones. Just because you are getting bigger does not give you the excuse to abuse little ones in any way. If you abuse a little child, it would be better for you if a big stone was put round your neck and you were thrown into the deepest part of the sea. Jesus said that and I am sure your prophet said something like that also. Children are human too and they have Human Rights. God bless you.