

Giving Up the Stick

Once upon a time, in a far off land, where everyone was blind, an assembly was held to discuss and praise the wonderful benefits of the “walking stick”. According to Legend, one day, a holy man inadvertently stumbled over a mysterious stick, which he picked up and used. From that day onward, his life and the lives of all those around him were changed forever.

The stick was of great assistance. Not only was it a source of security, it also gave the people a sense of hope and stability for the future. Generations upon generations of blind people grew up with the stick. They used it everywhere and for everything, and even kept it at their bedside at night. The stick was an integral part of their lives and part of everything they thought about.

“Stickers” were renewing old sticks, engineers were developing new ones, poets wrote odes to the stick, and people sang songs about it. Although all the sticks were more or less the same, each person had his very own unique one, and the mere thought of life without a stick became simply impossible.

At the Assembly, various models of advanced designs for sticks were presented, the fruit of many years of development and progress. Philosophers and thinkers discussed the hidden qualities and spirit of the stick. All agreed that there was a historical and mysterious connection between the revelation of the stick and the essence of blindness. The two may seem contradictory, but in a dialectical way they complimented each other, their origins being supreme and divine.

The last speaker of the day was someone who had never addressed the Assembly before. He crossed the huge hall and mounted the platform, but the tapping, ticking voice of the stick was silent.

He was very excited, and thanked the hosts for allowing him to speak. He told the people before him that from his own personal experience, all one has to do is throw the stick away, and open one’s eyes. With these simple actions, blindness disappears, and the world can be seen directly as it really is.

For a brief moment a great silence descended on the hall. Then the Assembly turned into a cacophony of voices. People who believed that the stick was their most important asset were shocked. Some cried out that they were being tricked, that if they followed such careless and evil advice, they would surely stumble and die.

Someone said that if we could see with our flesh and blood eyes, we would become just like dogs, horses, and cows that see material objects but lack the spiritual insight to see beyond them.

One of the elders proclaimed that even if the man was right, this would eventually harm them all: “If some people start to see, it will create complete chaos: If children can see, they will disobey their parents; in couples where only one partner is able to see will soon break-up; all of the stick-related industries will collapse; and speaking in general, once we step off the path of our ancestors, who knows what the consequences might be”.

The people became restless. Many were concerned that all of their childhood stories and memories, associated with the stick, would be lost. What about the touch and smell of grandfather's old stick? What about understanding the importance of the burden, and the significance of endurance in carrying and using the stick? In fact, hundreds of years of culture and tradition were at stake here.

Finally somebody stood up and said he was willing to throw his stick away if the man could make him see. The speaker replied that first one must throw the stick away, and then simply open one's eyes in order to see the world. It is the same as getting into the water first, if one wants to swim.

The man continued by saying that walking sticks were very beneficial; he was not against them. But a stick is just a stick, there is no good, or bad in it. It is, just what it is. There is no special meaning in blindness or in endurance, nothing sacred or sacrilegious about it. Any of the advantages that a stick may have to offer do not compare in any manner whatsoever to the advantages of seeing, even with only one eye. The stick is like medicine, but only medicine, there is however, a path to total health.

Unfortunately, his first public speech was also his last. For one reason or another, everybody was against his motion and preferred to remain blind.

Each and every one of us has a stick.
So much has been invested in it,
It is difficult to part with.
It has been of great help,
And in all honesty
Even saved us many times,
We must be completely out of our minds
And totally insane
To throw it away.
Because without that stick,
We will be seperated
Not only from our blindness...
But from our old, familiar personalities as well.

