The businessman and the ferryman

Once upon a time...

A businessman was travelling to another town in order to conlude some transaction. The town he was heading for was situated by a lake. He was in a hurry, something that is quite usual for a businessman. So he found out that he could save time if he crossed the lake instead of driving all the way around it. When he came to the lake, he therefore started to look for a ferry-service. He soon found a small ferry-berth and asked hte ferryman if he could take him over to the town on the other side of the lake right away. At first the ferryman was reluctant, as he wanted to wait for other passengers, but the businessman offered him a handsom sum, if they left at once. So it happened that the ferry left with only the businessman and the ferryman on board. The trip was supposed to last an hour and a half, and the businessman started a conversation with the ferryman. “What time is it?” was his first question. “I can’t tell you exactly, Sir, as I have no watch, but by now it should be around four o’clock”, the ferryman answered. “You don’t have a watch and are not able to tell the correct time? My good man in this way I am afraid that you have wasted 25 per cent of your life.” The ferryman did not say anything. He only watched the sky that had suddenly darkened. “What do you think of the new government we have?”, was the businessman’s next question. “I have no opinion on this,” the ferryman answered, “as I take no interest in politics.” “But,” the businessman responded, “we all have to be concerned about how our country is being governed. Didn’t you cast your vote at the recent election?” “No, I did not,” the ferryman answered. “Oh,” the businessman remarked, “then I am afraid that you have lost another 25 per cent of your life. But how can you avoid being concerned when you read in the newspapers about all the issues we are facing in this country?” By now the ferryman looked quite concerned. Not because of the businessman’s questions, but because it was blowing up for a gale. However, he answered by saying: “Sir, I cannot read and am therefore not disturbed by newspaper stories.” “What are you saying!” the businessman almost shouted. “You don’t read newspapers, in fact you can’t read at all. My good man, adding up to all that you have told me, I am afraid that you have lost at least 75 per cent of your life!” By now the boat bobbed up and down. The sky was getting very dark and it was blowing a full gale. For the first time the businessman looked worried. “It seems we are having a rough crossing,” he stated, looking at the ferryman. “Yes, Sir,” the ferryman said. “Please tell me, sir, can you swim?” “No, I never had time for this. I have had too many importnt matters to attend to,” the businessman answered. “This is very unfortunte, indeed Sir, because I am afraid to tell you that in a little while you will have lost 100 per cent of YOUR life”.

Thorbjörn Meyer, Ph.D, Sai Spirtual Stories, 2009