

Letter dated the 24th October 2000 addressed to the Secretary General, National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi seeking closure of the Ervadi Mental Homes in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Sub: Tamil Nadu - Inhuman Conditions in the so called Mental “Hostels” of Ervadi Darga in Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu – inhumanity includes admission into the so called mental hostels people who are of sound mind for extraneous reasons-urgent action requested.

In my Report dated 22nd October 2000 on an other Case referred to me by the NHRC, I had mentioned that I would be submitting separately a Report on the inhuman conditions in which the inmates are kept in the mental asylums run by private individuals there and on which immediate action is called for.

2. In connection with the Inquiry conducted by me in the case mentioned in para (1) above I visited one of these so called “mental hostels” called New Limrash Mental Hostel at Ervadi Darga in Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu. What I saw there would shock and challenge the conscience of even the most insensitive human beings. There were about 50 inmates at the time of my visit to this “mental hostel” at 8-00 pm on the 14th October 2000 and all of them had been kept in chains in pairs, the ankle of one person chained to the ankle of his companion. Not one of them appeared violently inclined to justify being restrained, leave alone having to be kept in chains. In my estimate, at least 80 % of them were normal persons and did not appear to have any “mental” problems. Admittedly my inspection was brief but given my experience in understanding these matters I am convinced that persons whom their families do not want keep with them for a variety of reasons are all being unjustly, unfairly and cruelly brought and dumped in such “hostels” in Ervadi. I spoke to a few of them and learned from them that either they were addicted to drugs or alcohol or just plain normal human beings for whom their families did not want to take responsibility. It is among the most pathetic sights that one can come across in our country, even by our own very low standards of humanity to our fellow men. As pointed by me in my Report, this “mental hostel facility” has been cynically used by those very people who are supposed to take care of the disabled to take revenge on others.

3. Information was also provided to me during my visit that as many as eight inmates in the various “hostels” had died on 6.4.2000, 4 of them in a “hostel” named Limras. Three of them allegedly died in an asylum run by Hagther Committed and one died in the Darga itself. In other words, it is suspected that eight persons died on 6.4.2000 on account of Cholera. This event seems to have drawn the attention of the Government and a Committee had been formed to look into the whole question headed by the Collector. However, when I inspected one of these “mental hostels” people were still in chains, which raises the presumption that the problems here are not being attended to seriously.

4. Since my conversation with you on this yesterday on telephone shows that the NHRC is already aware of the situation in Ervadi, I do not want to write more on this subject excepting to request you kindly to initiate action in the following manner:

1. Order the release forthwith from the 17 “hostels” all normal persons and have them sent to their respective homes.
2. Have every one of the inmates unchained and kept in humane conditions of protection.
3. Have medical and health assistance arranged to every one of the inmates so that all their injuries sustained on account of being chained are attended to.
4. Get the Government of Tamil Nadu to take full responsibility for the maintenance of such inmates who are really mentally disturbed and who require care and rehabilitation in properly appointed asylums with relevant specialists and
5. Prosecute selectively a few very bad cases of persecutors who wantonly admitted normal persons into the “hostels”.

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