

29. Japa and bhaja

THE Ministers, P. K. Savant and Lakshminarasiah, one from Andhra and the other from Maharaashtra, spoke informatively and enthusiastically to you, on health administration and on the part that spiritual discipline plays in the upkeep of mental and physical health.

Savant spoke about the work being done in the Maharaashtra State to eradicate disease in the villages and to persuade doctors to settle in the villages. He said that the ancient Ayurvedhic system of medicine was more suited to the food habits and the climatic peculiarities of this country and since it used the drugs available in the neighbourhood of the village, it was cheaper and more easily available. He also said that he has never been a patient so far, because he has been able to resist disease by means of strict observance of the rules regarding food, sleep and recreation. His faith in Baaba, he said, has proved a great reserve of strength to overcome illness.

Lakshminarasiah is himself a doctor; he spoke in praise of the quiet atmosphere of the hermitages of India and he wanted that the simple living of the ancient seers be revived. He said that deep down in the heart of every Indian there is a stratum of faith in *Sanaathana Dharma* which has to be tapped for all kinds of reconstruction.

Being the anniversary function of the hospital, I have to say something about physical ailments, their treatment and cure. Health is sought by man, not for its own sake; he tries to cure his illness, for illness means grief; he tries to secure health, for health means joy. He is after *Aanandha* (joy). At all times, through all acts, he seeks only *Aanandha*. A fish thrown on the bank of the lake wriggles and struggles to enter the water again. Man's struggle to get back into *Aanandha* is also of the same nature; he was in *Aanandha* and he has been thrown into misery. His native element is *Aanandha*. He was calm, and experienced concord, *Shaanthi* and *Prema*, when he was in the realm of *Aanandha*. Now, this *Aanandha* has to be won back, each for himself. No other can get it for him. The minister described how the Plan is providing food, clothing and shelter for all. But, even those who have these three in ample measure are not free from misery; they have not been restored to *Aanandha*. *Aanandha* is an inner treasure, won by detachment and discipline. We must have a Plan for *Aanandha*, a Plan for *Shaanthi* and *Santhosha* (Peace and Contentment).

Consider first things first

A person may be sitting on a soft-cushioned sofa in an air-conditioned room, but his heart may be burning with unspeakable anxiety and fear. The body is as the cart and the mind as the horse. Now, planning places the cart before the horse. It gives first place to body and its needs. Consider first things first. Then only can the true culture of India be restored in all its ancient vitality. The sages of this land had known of the mine of *Aanandha* that lies in every human heart and they had discovered methods of developing that mine and working that gold. They said that if *Bhoomaatha* (Mother Earth), *Gomaatha* (Mother Cow), *Nijamaatha* (one's own mother) and *Vedhamaatha* (Mother Scripture) were revered and fostered, and used as best as they could be, happiness is certain and liberation is assured. It is because the people of India followed this path that India has remained India and not become either Europe or China.

Inner harmony is what really matters

Even the scarcity of food about which the minister spoke is due to the decline in *shraddha* (faith) which was the hallmark of the ryots. When the strength that comes from the enthusiastic pursuit

of one's profession wanes, when the courage of self-sacrifice is absent, all activity suffers. Have faith in the Lord or the *Aathmathathwa*; it will vitalise you. A fakir went to Akbar and he was told that Akbar was at his prayers and so could not give audience for some time. He was asked to wait in the ante-room. But, he refused to wait. He said, "What can this beggar get from that beggar?" All are beggars at the gate of God. The hero is he who does not beg or cringe or flatter or fawn. He knows that the Lord knows best. If it is His will, He will grant food and raiment; if not, well, let His will prevail. That is the path of *Sharanaagathi* or *Prapatthi* (absolute surrender).

There should be no begging or bargaining; surrender, submit to His will. Some people bargain with God and promise to give Him this or that costly article or their own hair, if a certain illness is cured or a certain calamity is averted. Lord Venkateshwara or any other form of the Lord does not need the hair of your head, but He wants you to respect the plighted word, to whomsoever given.

So in order to be true to your word and not incur the sin of falsehood and deceit, you have to offer it to Him, whatever the lapse of time. Shaving off the hair of the head is a sign that you have lost the delusion that it is physical beauty that counts; you make yourselves willfully ugly, so that you can demonstrate that it is inner harmony, inner charm, that really matters. *Sanyaasins* (ascetics) too have to shave likewise, in order to escape from a similar delusion, and equip themselves with the proper attitude.

Even the best of doctors will not be able to save a man when death calls. Men have to respond to that call, whether they are on a pilgrimage to Kedhara or Badhri or Rameshwaram, whether they are bridegrooms in the ceremonial seat before the ritual fire. Death brooks no delay; death accepts no excuse. Tears do not move His heart, nor can threats keep Him away.

The waking and dreaming stages

Emperor Janaka was listening to the soothing strains of music in the Durbar Hall, and he fell asleep on his throne. Slowly and silently, the courtiers and musicians slid out of the hall leaving him to himself. He had a dream. His kingdom was invaded, over-run, pillaged. He was captured and imprisoned. But he escaped, he was wandering alone, in enemy territory, overcome with hunger and thirst. The jungle was dark. He groaned aloud. The queen heard the groan and woke him! He saw himself as Emperor on the throne, surrounded by servants. Then, a doubt started haunting Janaka: "Which is true, that or this?" While dreaming, the dream was as true as the experience of the palace when awake. This is true, while awake; that was true, while dreaming. Each has only relative value, while at that stage. Nothing is absolutely true, really real. The waking experience is as unreal as the dream experience. When you are in deep sleep, there is no world at all. When you attain the super-conscious fourth stage, the 'I' alone remains, the Universal 'I', which was mistaken even in the sleeping stage as limited and particular.

Fix responsibility for your health on Him

A few minutes of quiet thought will convince you of this. But you are too busy with trivialities to pay attention to the vital needs. Plant the seed of the name of the Lord, any one of His thousand names that appeals to you, in the well-prepared soil of your heart and let it sprout in the silence there; water it with love and service to fellowmen; guard it against pests and cattle, the outward dragging emotions and passions, by putting up the fence of *japa* and *dhyaana*, then you will get the harvest of *Aanandha*.

Minister Savant said that faith in Sai Baaba is keeping him fit, the mind and body, all these years. He was the chairman of Shirdhi Samasthan for many years. His devotion and attachment to that body are known only to him and Me. So, when he says that Baaba has been keeping him healthy and strong, I know that it is true and that his faith is deep and sincere. If you have sincere devotion you will fix the responsibility for your health on Him and He will also accept that responsibility. Your mind will be so full of happiness that your body will be fit instrument for *Saadhana*.

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