

34. Die into a new day

THIS is a conventional celebration, the twelfth Annual Day of the Sathya Sai Hospital, with the Principal of the Medical College, Goa, as president and this vast gathering of devotees from all parts of India as participants. The Medical Officer presents the report for the year and gives details of the in-patients and out-patients treated, as well as of other signs of progress. But the Report naturally is not concerned with the basic question: For what purpose should health be maintained? What is the best use to which the body has to be put? For, the body with all its equipment of senses, intellect, feeling and memory, is an instrument, an implement, a chariot which one uses for movement towards a goal. The owner of the chariot is any day more important than the chariot itself; it is for his sake that it has to be kept trim and efficient and in good repair.

The duration of life is under the control of Him who gave life, the Creator. It does not depend on the calories of food consumed or the quantity of drugs that are injected, or the qualifications of the physician who prescribes the medicines. The chief causes of ill-health and death are fear and loss of faith. If one concentrates on the *aathma*, which has no change or characteristics, no subtraction or senility, no decline or damage, man can conquer death. Therefore, the most effective prescription is the injection of *aathma-vidhya* (knowledge of the Soul as one's real Self).

Engage yourself only in *Saathwik* recreations

Death stalks its prey everywhere, at all times with relentless determination. It pursues its victims into hospitals, hill-stations, theaters, aeroplanes, submarines, in fact, no one can escape it or take refuge from its grasp. God alone is the giver of life, the guardian of life and the goal of life. Do not contemplate on Death; it is just an incident in life; contemplate on God, who is the master of all life---God who is the Indweller in this physical frame. Be aware of Him all through life and offer all your activity---breathing, talking, walking, earning and spending---to Him, for it was by Him and through Him that you were able to do all these things. To fall ill and to call in a doctor--this is something unnatural, debasing. Once you have offered yourself to God, it must be well with you. There can be nothing ill.

Regulate food habits; restrain the greed of the tongue. Eat only *Saathwik* (conducive to equanimity) or pure food; engage yourselves only in *Saathwik* recreations. Then you can be free from physical and mental ill-health. Bear calumny, loss, disappointment, defeat, boldly and with equanimity; then, no mental depression can over-whelm you. I must tell you that I am happy when some one among you is subjected to suffering, for that is a chance given to you to demonstrate your intelligence and sense of values.

Harischandhra (the Emperor who stuck to Truth in spite of agonising travail, which he could have avoided by the utterance of a single lie), had a series of terrible disasters---poverty, exile, persecution by his creditor, the sale into slavery of his queen, his son, and his own self and the demeaning job that was allotted to him by his master in charge of the cremation ghat in Benares--the toll collector. He never bent or broke but stuck to his determination not to yield to the call of unrighteousness.

Think of *Naamasmarana* as a spiritual discipline

The Name of God is the most effective tonic; it will keep off all illness. Do not indulge in *Naamasmarana* as a pastime or a fashion or a passing phase, or as the unpleasant part of an imposed time-table, or as a bitter quota to be fulfilled each day. Think of it as a *saadhana*, to be seriously taken up for the purpose of reducing your attachments to fleeting objects, purifying and strengthening you, and liberating you from the cycle of birth and death. Hold fast to it as the means of rescuing yourself in every way, from the bonds of time and change. It looks a frail cure for such a fearful malady; but, it is a penance, nevertheless.

The common excuse for escaping from this urgent duty to oneself is that one has no time for *Naamasmarana* in the hectic schedule of activity that has become the lot of man at the present time! If the burden of a hundred odd jobs can be borne because they are unavoidable, can the extra job of *Naamasmarana* be such an undesirable addition? He who carries a hundred, can surely carry one more. Moreover, this is a continuing basic activity, not part of a schedule of events. It has to become as much a must as breathing; as welcome to the tongue as sugar; as essential for happy living as sleep or food or water. This one ever-present job will alleviate the burden of all the hundred jobs, make them all lighter and more worth-while. Rise every day with the thought of God! spend every day with the Name of God; go back to bed! with the thought of His Glory as enshrined in His Name.

Know that life is one long ordeal

You go to bed on a certain date and day; you awake to find that the date and the day have changed! You have grown a day older; death has come a step nearer. Much water has flowed under the bridge. Similarly, when you go into sleep (death), great changes happen; you awake to a new date and a new day, with old tendencies and traits still affecting the new embodiment. Life is one long ordeal; know this even when things seem to be quite exhilarating. Any moment the road may turn into a morass, the sky may darken, fortune may turn away.

Earn the sword of *jnaana* to cut as under the veil of *Maayaa*. Discriminate between the real and the un-real early enough, during the journey towards the Goal. If the eye is not helping you to derive the unending joy of visualising God in everything it brings before your mind, then it is far better to be blind; if your ear drags you into the realm of filthy cacophony, it is far better to be deaf. The senses must not plunge you into the sensual; they must serve your real interests and sublimate your desires and appetites. That is the only way to ensure health and happiness.

Prashanthi Nilayam, 23-9-1968