

3. Food, the heart and the mind

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Aathma! It is essential to observe the principle of moderation in food habits, work and sleep. The Buddha, preached the same principle of moderation to his disciples. "Be always moderate, never indulge in excess," proclaimed the Buddha. In fact, moderation is the royal road to happiness.

The modern man, who flouts the principle of moderation in every aspect of life, endangers his health and well-being. The food consumed by man should be proper, pure and wholesome. But nowadays people eat whatever they get and wherever they get it, and thereby spoil their health. Food plays a major role in the preservation of health. Care should be taken to see that the food consumed does not have much fat content, for the fats consumed in large quantity are detrimental not only to one's physical health but also to one's mental health. Meat and alcoholic drinks take a heavy toll on man's health, causing many a disease in him.

The efficacy of cardiac surgery

This international symposium has for its theme "The Heart and its Ailments." Also on the agenda are discussion about the preventive aspects of diseases as well as the treatment and cure of heart diseases. Questions are raised about the efficacy of Cardiac Surgery and its related effects.

The heart is a special organ in the human system. It is pulsating ceaselessly unlike the other organs. Heart surgery is a highly complex operation, as the surgery has to be performed without arresting the heartbeat. At the same time the functioning of the lungs has also to be kept up.

Medical men of genius invented the heart-lung machine in 1956 to carry on the activities of the heart as well as the lung during cardiac operations. The machine takes upon itself the function of the heart and the lung ensuring purification of the blood and keeping up circulation of the blood. The details of the functioning of this heart-lung machine are well known to the doctors. The tube which is fitted connecting the heart and the machine should be airtight and should be fixed with great care, for any lapse in the fitting of the tube may cause air bubbles which will endanger the patient's life. Unfailing power supply is most crucial for the success of the operation as any interruption in power supply will stall the operation. Therefore we have to depend on generators for ensuring uninterrupted power supply during the course of the operation.

Prevention is better than cure

Questions are posed whether heart surgery ensures a permanent cure. Cardiac surgery is helpful in so far as it enables the patient to carry on his daily activities and lead a normal life. But, it is wrong to conclude that surgery is the only way of curing heart diseases. Some of the diseases can be cured even by medicine. In my opinion, it is the primary responsibility of every individual to prevent becoming a victim of heart disease by regulating his food and other habits. Prevention is better than cure. There will be little room for cardiac ailments if one's food habits are properly controlled and regulated.

Research has revealed that non-vegetarian and alcoholic addicts are more prone to heart ailments than vegetarians. If the vegetarian food that is consumed should be a balanced and wholesome, it should contain liberal doses of vitamin C and vitamin E, which are available in vegetables like carrots. The presence of these vitamins prevents heart ailments in a large measure. Every effort should be made to keep the human body healthy. Health is wealth. Wealth cannot be enjoyed by

a person with poor health. Health is more important because it gives physical and mental strength to a person.

Birds and beasts do not suffer from cardiac and digestive ailments to which man is prone. The cause can be traced to the natural food which the animals consume, unlike human beings who consume all sorts of fried and cooked items of food being slaves to the palate. Modern man consumes many artificial foodstuffs and a variety of alcoholic drinks, which are injurious to health. Birds and beasts lead natural lives, while the artificial life styles of man today takes a heavy toll of his health. When man observes moderation in diet he can be saved from most diseases. In the entire range of God's creation man alone is endowed with the faculty of discrimination. It is this faculty which sets him apart from animals. Man should exercise his discretion and discrimination in regard to food habits.

How to bring about mental transformation?

The progress of the universe is bound up with the progress of man. Any amount of development in the areas of scientific, economic and social spheres will not be of much use without mental transformation. How can we bring about this transformation? It is by restraining passions and emotions. Since mental tension is most detrimental to man's health, man should learn the art of controlling his passions and emotions, which cause stresses and strains. It is also essential to keep our mind serene and peaceful while eating food. We should not indulge in discussion of topics which will cause agitation and excitement and disturb our mental peace while we are taking food. Mental tension is responsible for ill health. We should also avoid viewing TV, video, etc., while eating food, as they may cause mental disturbances.

Today there is pollution in everything such as the air we breathe, the water we drink, the sounds that are jarring to the ears and the food we consume. Because of this all round pollution, man's health is affected. Apart from this, man's mind is also polluted making him susceptible to diseases. Man should make an earnest endeavour to lead a serene and pure life. He should realise the truth that troubles and turmoils are temporary, like passing clouds. There is no scope for agitations to arise if one realises this truth. One who realises this truth will not allow his mind to be swayed by the passions of anger, cruelty, etc. Passions yield only temporary satisfaction, but cause serious emotional disturbances. Hence, it is imperative on the part of man not to yield to any unbecoming passions while taking food. The observance of the three P's, namely, purity, patience, and perseverance, vouchsafes permanent happiness and good health free from diseases.

The three root causes of cardiac ailments

It is not only unbridled passion which damages the health of man. Living on ill-gotten money also causes ill-health to some extent. Living on earnings got by unjust means causes many unknown diseases to take root in us. It is said;

As is the food, so is the mind;

As is the mind, so are the thoughts;

As are the thoughts, so is the conduct;

As is the conduct, so is the health.

Man today is a victim of worry. What is the cause of this worry? Lack of contentment is the cause. The rich man is not contented in spite of the accumulation of wealth. Worry causes hurry

and both together bring about ill-health. So, Worry, Hurry and Curry (fatty foods) are the root causes of cardiac ailments.

The consumption of large quantities of fat is the cause of cardiovascular diseases. Doctors advise against the consumption of fatty food stuffs which cause increase in weight resulting in susceptibility to cardiac diseases. The presence of toxins also inflicts equal damage. So one should eat in moderate quantity the right type of food and avoid intoxicating drinks to safeguard his health. The intake of food should be gradually reduced after crossing 50 years.

Some people consume food indiscriminately unmindful of the caloric content of the food taken. For example, people eat *pappads* (thin circular flour preparations) fried in oil which have high calorie content. People also consume ghee which is also a high calorie food. A single *pappad* has 100-150 calories of energy. A single spoon of ghee has 100 calories of energy. Even when the quantity of food intake is reduced, reductions in the calorie content is not ensured.

There are some doctors who advise their patients against smoking and addiction to alcohol, but they themselves smoke and drink! This gap between precept and practice raises doubts in the minds of patients about the value of the medical advice given by them. Such doctors, who do not observe harmony in speech and practice, mislead the patients.

Triple qualities that a doctor should reflect

Embodiments of Love! You have high degrees such as MD, FRCS, MRCP, etc., as a result of your sincere striving. But it is a mistake to think that these degrees are yours. In fact these degrees have been conferred on you for your study, skill, memory power and knowledge. These degrees will truly belong to you on the day you apply this knowledge in practice. Unfortunately, in this modern age all activities and professions are tainted by a commercial outlook and greed for earning money. Even the sacred profession of a doctor has degenerated into a business. A doctor should reflect the triple qualities of sacrifice, love and compassion in treating his patients. But some doctors do not have these virtues at all! They misuse their divine and sacred knowledge for the sake of money. Money is important, but we must exercise discretion in this regard. You can charge the correct fees from the wealthy, but be kind and considerate while dealing with the poor. Try to give free treatment to the poor. You should not treat a millionaire and a pauper alike! It is said, "*Vaidhyo Naarayano Harihi*" (The doctor is equal to God). As the Lord has love and compassion, doctors too should have these divine virtues of the Lord. A doctor devoid of these virtues is not a doctor at all!

Doctors should win the hearts of the patients by talking to them with compassion and concern. Diseases are half cured when the doctors talk to the patients with love and consideration. The sick and the diseased respond favourably to your treatment once you start talking to them with love and with a smiling face. But, if you wear a grim expression, the patient loses heart. Doctors should administer the injection of courage and encouragement as calcium administered to the weak. It is essential that doctors should have the sterling virtues of love and compassion. Compassion is more important than money.

Svaami's example to lead a healthy life

How to lead a healthy life? Let Me tell you about My own health. I am sixty eight years old, and believe it or not, My weight since my 14th year of age has been constant at 108 pounds only. It never went up to 109 pounds not came down to 107. You can lead a healthy life once you achieve this kind of balance and moderation. I never eat even a little bit excess. I observe the

principle of moderation whether I am invited for food by a millionaire or a pauper. Even though I am sixty eight years, My body is in perfect trim! I do not suffer from aches and My heart is as sound as a rock. There is none who can work like Me and exert himself as much as I do! The secret of My sound health is My regulated food habits.

This is how one has to achieve the unity and harmony of food, head and God.

Spirit of sacrifice of some doctors

The foremost quality of a doctor is the spirit of sacrifice. We have organized this Symposium to explore ways and means of rendering help to the sick and the diseased. We have in India some doctors who lead lives of sacrifice like Dr. Venugopal, Dr. Bhan and Dr. Sampath from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. These doctors, who are committed to the cause of service, come to our hospital without even charging the travelling expenses. Their sacrifice contributes to the sanctity, of this Institute of Higher Medical Sciences. There is an atmosphere of infective joy and good cheer which pervades our hospital. Everybody is in smiles--the patients, their relatives the nurses, the doctors, everyone! They are all like flowers in full bloom. It is not the same with most other hospitals.

The essential mark of a hospital is its cleanliness. Clean toilets are an index of the cleanliness of a hospital. Our hospital is as clean as a mirror, as it is kept always clean by the team of dedicated *seva dhal* volunteers who relentlessly work hard with a spirit of service and sacrifice. It is not the service of one, but the service of many which has contributed to the rapid development of our hospital! A single flower cannot make a garland. All the people--the patients, doctors, workers---work in a spirit of harmony and unity. It is this sense of unity which contributes to purity and this purity of heart secures divinity. This hospital is a direct proof of the presence of purity, unity and divinity It is our fond. hope that such purity, unity and divinity should prevail in other hospitals as well! Unity is most essential in all fields of activity-moral, scientific and spiritual. Purity vanishes in the absence of unity. Divinity will be absent when there is no purity and unity. Humanity will be healthier if doctors resolve to offer two days of free treatment every week.

You can work wonders with purity of heart

Some doctors wonder how we are able to give free treatment, free operations and *free* meals to our patients. To be frank, there should not be any room for wonder in tiffs regard. You can work wonders with purity of heart. Any work which is started with purity of heart is bound to succeed. Money flows if your work is suffused with love and sacrifice. People will provide munificent funds to support any noble endeavour. The land of Bhaarath has been a *Punya Bhuumi* (Land of sanctity), *Thyaaga Bhuumi* (Land of Sacrifice), *Yoga Bhuumi* (Land of spiritual austerities), and *Karma Bhuumi* (Land of righteous action). In fact, there is no dearth of money in India.

Doctors should first and foremost have faith in spirituality. Faith in spirituality alone can bring about transformation of humanity. Spirituality is not the celebration of festivals, not even performance of rituals. True spirituality calls for earnest endeavour to eradicate all animal qualities. Today humanity has descended to such a degrading level that men see evil in good, without trying to see good in evil.

Doctors who are eminent experts in their fields have come to participate in the symposium here. Sincere efforts should be made to put your great talents and skill to good use. The climes and countries from which you have come may be different. But all of you have one thing in common-noble feelings. These noble feelings are God's gift to man and come by Divine grace.

Treat the patients as your own kith and kin. The help which you extend in good faith to your patients will be rewarded in course of time. It is My wish and blessing that you will have useful discussions and come out with ways and means of helping mankind to be free from heart ailments.

Discourse at the inaugural session of the Second International Symposium on Cardio-vascular Diseases held in the Sathya Sai Institute Auditorium on 21-1-1994.

Foster love, live in love, spread love--that is the spiritual exercise which will yield the maximum benefit.

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