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Sathwic Food

The lambent light of the Atma shines with eternal effulgence. It has neither birth nor death, nor beginning nor end. Nor can it be destroyed. It is the immortal witness, the beholder of all space and time.

Embodiments of Love!

“*Na sreya niyamam vina*”, said Krishna to Arjuna. An unregulated, unsystematic, undisciplined and disorderly life cannot experience joy, goodness or well-being. One who controls and regulates the actions of others is called *Yama*. One who controls himself and regulates his own actions possesses the quality of *samyama*. *Yama* has no control over a person endowed with *samyama*. There should be discipline and regulation in life in accordance with self-imposed constraints. These self-imposed constraints constitute

the *thapas* of an individual. An unrestrained life is an immoral life. The wind and the sea and also the other phenomena obey the universal laws of nature. The earth rotates round its own axis and revolves around the sun periodically. These uniformities in the universe are the laws ordained by God. They are obeyed by the macrocosm as well as the microcosm. The laws of nature ordained by God are necessary for creating and sustaining the universe and for maintaining its dynamic equilibrium.

Such self-imposed discipline is conducive to real *santhi*—peace of mind, poise, equanimity, and stable equilibrium of the mind. Peace of mind is the most desirable thing in this world. It gives us physical and psychological euphoria. In order to achieve this *santhi*, an aspirant must develop a thirst for *jnana* or spiritual wisdom. He must also acquire the qualities of love, sympathy and compassion, and do selfless service to others. *Santhi* should not be regarded as a part-time virtue to be cultivated only during *dhyana* or meditation. It is a constant state of inner tranquillity. It should become habitual and instinctive. *Dhyana* is also universal and eclectic. It is not restricted by the barriers of space-time. It is not governed by the dogmas of any particular creed. *Dhyana* is a way of life for the total divinisation of man. *Dhyana* and *santhi* are inseparable. *Dhyana* promotes *santhi* and *santhi* intensifies *dhyana*. The quality of Divinity is not limited to the icon that we worship. Some people experience the most profound

peace of mind as long as they are in meditation. But, the moment they come out of the meditative state of mind, they exhibit their demoniac nature. It should not be so. The divine attributes acquired during meditation should be cultivated and nurtured in everyday life.

Mere medication will not cure a sick man. He must also control his diet for quick recovery from illness. There is no single panacea for the great world of sorrow. Each individual has his own specific type of suffering. Nevertheless, meditation on God is an unfailing remedy for human suffering if it is supplemented with the practice of *dharma* and the strict observance of moral restraints. We are all interdependent. We must learn to share the joys and sorrows of other people. A practitioner of meditation must pray for the welfare of others as sincerely as he prays for his own welfare.

A spiritual aspirant need not live in monastic isolation. He should practise universal compassion, which is nothing but an intense desire for the welfare of the entire humanity. Food plays an important part in the cultivation of universal compassion. Yesterday, I talked to you about the right type of food for spiritual aspirants. Today, I will deal with *sathwic* food, or the type of food necessary for spiritual progress. *Sathwic* food enables the *sadhaka* to apprehend the omnipresent reality of Divinity. He progresses through the four stages of the life divine. These four phases of spiritual

advancement are *salokya*, *samipyra*, *sarupya* and *sayujya*. *Salokya* is entrance to the field of theocentric reality. *Samipyra* is proximity to the fundamental spiritual substance of the universe. *Sarupya* is the assimilation of the form of the deity. *Sayujya* is liberation and ultimate union with the Godhead.

Sathwic food is conducive to the progressive attainment of these four states of spirituality viz., *salokya*, *samipyra*, *sarupya*, and *sayujya*. Here, it is necessary to examine the implications of the concept of *Sathwic* food.

Some people are under the mistaken impression that *sathwic* food should consist of only milk, yoghurt, sweets and fruits. They believe that they will become *sathwic* by consuming large quantities of these delicacies. They are absolutely mistaken. Excessive and immoderate consumption of milk and its products awakens and aggravates the *rajasic* and *thamasic* qualities in man. A diet extra rich in milk, curds, and ghee cannot be called *sathwic*, because it leads to the development of the passionate nature of man.

In this context, I have to dilate on the nature of human knowledge and the five gateways of perception. Man is endowed with the five sensory organs connected with the five faculties of *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, and *gandha* (sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell). The preservation and the development of these sensory faculties depend on the *sathwic* food taken through the

mouth. The type of *sathwic* food that we take is determined by the fancies of individual taste. We feel satisfied when we take the right type of food through our mouths. But we forget that we absorb an incorporeal type of food through the other sensory organs also. The wholesome effect of *sathwic* food will be nullified if we listen to bad talk, indulge in bad talk, look at bad things, come into physical contact with bad things and smell bad things. Mind and body are tainted, contaminated and polluted by evil. Thus, *sathwic* food alone is not enough for the spiritual regeneration of man. We should not speak about evil. We must avoid condemning others and praising ourselves. Self-adulation and self-glorification retard spiritual development. We must feed our sensory organs with wholesome food, wholesome sounds and wholesome sights. The tongue is meant to sing the glory of God. The ears are meant for feasting on the glorious manifestations of the divine.

Each organ of perception must be provided with its proper spiritual sustenance. Thus, *sathwic* food does not mean the moderate consumption of milk, curds, ghee, and fruits alone but the enjoyment provided by noble thoughts, sacred sounds, holy sights and spiritual discussions as well. We must develop *sathwic* sight and spiritual vision. We must have *darshan* of the beauty of nature and the divinity of icons in temple. We should avoid all distracting sights and sounds. We should not look at anyone with an evil eye. Evil thoughts develop

an evil eye. The eyes are the windows of the heart. The heart should overflow with love and compassion. *sathwic* nature is developed by feeding the eyes with *sathwic* sights.

The sense of smell is also equally important. The olfactory sense should be satisfied with sweet smells. All obnoxious odours should be avoided. To create an atmosphere of holiness, sweet perfumes are used and fragrant incense sticks are burnt at the altars in temples. Foul smells destroy sanctity. The idea of holiness is always associated with sweet scents and perfumes.

The tactile sensation or the sense of touch should be satisfied by coming into physical contact with the feet of holy men. Contact with evil men must be avoided. Their contacts promote bad thoughts.

Sathsanga or the company of the virtuous is of supreme importance. *Sathsanga* leads to non-attachment. Non-attachment induces equanimity which, in turn, leads to liberation during life.

With the aid of *Sathsanga*, many things are achieved. We cultivate good habits and participate in pious activity. *Sathsanga* sanctifies the human body for becoming a temple of God.

Thus, a comprehensive and balanced *Sathwic* diet must provide *sathwic* satisfaction to all the sensory organs of the human body. The sensations of *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, and *gandha* must be provided with

sathwic satisfaction by means of *sathwic* discourse, *sathwic* company, *sathwic* sights, *sathwic* food, and *sathwic* perfumes. A comprehensive *sathwic* diet provides *sathwic* gratification to all the sensory organs. Today, the idea of *sathwic* food has been restricted to food consisting of fruits, milk and its products. We have already seen that the immoderate consumption of such food has a deleterious effect on the human body.

The spiritual technique of *dhyana* mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* cannot be beneficial in the absence of comprehensive *sathwic* food, which should feed the entire body with *sathwic* sights, sounds, smells and tactile sensations. Otherwise, it becomes a mere pose. Today, *dhyana* has degenerated into a fashionable pastime. The true meaning and significance of *dhyana* should be clearly grasped in order to avoid the pitfalls and dangers inherent in its faulty practice. Restraints are necessary for the welfare of human beings. Limited food and *sathwic* food are essential for spiritual progress. Such food should give satisfaction to all the sensory organs.

All rivers join the ocean. Likewise, the aim of all *sadhana* is the merging of the individual soul with the universal soul. God's grace is like the unlimited ocean. The water vapour symbolises the *sadhana* (propitiation); the cloud is *sathya* (truth), and the raindrops are *prema* (love). They collect together to form the stream of *Ananda* (Bliss), which joins the vast ocean of *Anugraha* (Divine Grace).

Knowledge obtained directly from *Sastras* and scriptures is like sea water. By exercising the faculty of discrimination and by entering the meditative state of mind, the pure water of wisdom can be distilled from the saline sea water of scriptural knowledge. This knowledge is humanised by experience and divinised by selfless love.

Bookish knowledge divorced from experience leads to fanaticism and intellectual arrogance. Knowledge by acquaintance is always superior to knowledge by description. Practice is better than precept. We must live the scriptural injunctions rather than merely talk about them. Self-imposed discipline is more effective than discipline enforced by some external authority.

The quality and quantity of food that we take determine our thoughts and feelings. There is indeed an intimate connection between “food, head, and God”. *Sathwic* food is conducive to self-realisation, and liberation from the dualities and relativities of the world.

Rajasic food generates virulent thoughts. By consuming non-vegetarian food we develop brutal mentalities. Those who are practising meditation must abstain from meat. We should also remember constantly that *ahimsa* or non-violence is the supreme *dharma*. It is sin to kill innocent animals for the sake of filling our stomachs. We must remember that God dwells in all

creatures. “*Isa vasyam idam sarvam*” (All this is pervaded by God), says the *Isa Upanishad*. The truth of this aphorism can be experienced through meditation.

“*Udaranimittam bahukrita vesham*”—for the sake of the stomach, men don different guises. Like the chameleon, they change their colours according to the demands of the situation. They become opportunists and hypocrites. In the end, they try to justify their opportunism and rationalise their hypocrisy. They delude themselves by this policy of expediency and time-serving. Such people can never follow the path of meditation. It should not be supposed that the path of meditation is easy and artificial. If *dhyana* is easy, why should the great sages of our country have mortified themselves for the attainment of *moksha*? Some modern techniques of meditation claim to achieve *nirvikalpa samadhi* instantaneously. *Dhyana* is mistaken for temporary freedom from worries. If this sort of anaesthesia is needed, one can become tipsy by drinking liquor. *Dhyana* is not a state of inebriety or amnesia. *Dhyana* is a state of complete identification with one’s *dheya* or object of meditation. It is a state of total spiritual empathy. Today, many artificial and distorted methods of meditation are being popularised. Students must beware of them because they are all unprofitable and potentially dangerous.

There are three *gunas*: *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas*. There are three eyes: the two physical eyes and the

invisible spiritual eye. There are three times: the past, the present and the future. And there are the three worlds. The unity of these triads is vouchsafed to the spiritual aspirant during his transcendental state of meditation. Then sin and sorrow are annihilated. *Sath-Chith-Ananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) is experienced through meditation and complete self-surrender. This is the essence of *dhyana*. Today, a number of rites and rituals are being performed as a part of *sadhana*. These are only aids to concentration. They are not of much use for true *dhyana*. Correct posture, the right type of food and the right place are only aids to *dharana* or concentration. *Sathwic* food, *sathsanga*, etc., assist the *sadhaka* to some extent. They develop the habit of concentration. Our efforts should not end here. Concentration should be followed up by contemplation and meditation.

There should be an element of reciprocity in all human and personal relations. Love, sympathy, compassion and affection are always mutual. They cannot thrive in isolation. They atrophy and vanish wherever selfishness and jealousy manifest themselves. We must discharge our duties in a spirit of self-surrender without consideration for wealth or recognition.

Prema (love) is the greatest *sadhana* (spiritual activity). *Prema* is not mere reciprocal love. It is an extended and sublimated form of self-love. It is the extension of love to humanity and to the entire creation. The essence of *prema* as a *sadhana* lies in the cultivation

of humanitarianism, universal compassion and altruism.

Nobody can become a saint or a sage overnight. We must start early, drive slowly and reach the goal safely. Haste makes waste and waste creates worry. A true *sadhaka* must develop the qualities of patience and persistence in order to reach the ultimate goal of spiritual enlightenment.