

21. Seaworthy boat

To many it might appear strange that in this *Aanandha-nilaya* (Abode of Bliss), there exists an *Aarogya Nilaya* (Abode of Health) or Hospital. They may wonder why prominence is given to bodily health, in a place that is dedicated to the health of the spirit. But, for attaining the Four Aims of Human life, *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Artha* (Prosperity), *Kaama* (Fulfilment of Desires) and *Moksha* (Liberation from bondage), the basic requirement is health of body and mind. Disease means feeling uneasy, disturbed, on account of the upsetting of one's temper or balance or equilibrium, which affects the physical as well as mental condition. This happens for two reasons: faulty *Aahaara* (food) and faulty *Vihaara* (activities).

It is wise to prevent disease than run after remedies after it has happened or grown beyond control. Man does not attend to precautionary measures; he allows things to worsen and then the disease is aggravated by fear, uncertainty and anxiety. There is an axiom believed in by men of old, which says: 'One meal a day makes a *Yogi*, two meals a day make a *Bhogi* and three meals a day make a *Rogi*. *Yogi* is the contented God-centred man. *Bhogi* is the man revelling in sensual pleasure. *Rogi* is the man ridden by illness. Yes. The quantity of food intake by the well-to-do is now much beyond essential requirements. Over-eating has become a fashion.

The breakfast does not serve to break any fast, for, there has been no fasting at all! It is as good as a full meal. Lunch is pressed in and consists of many dishes, chosen for the palate rather than to assuage hunger. Tea is tea only in name; it includes rather heavy fare, out of all proportion to the needs of the body. Dinner at night is the heaviest meal and includes the largest variety and so one goes to bed, weighted with unwanted stuff, to roll from side to side, in a vain effort to get a few minutes of sleep. The shortage of food grains is mainly due to bad and wasteful eating habits; it can be set right, and people can live longer and more healthily, if only they eat the minimum, rather than fill themselves with maximum.

Regular prayers will give strength and courage

Regular prayers twice a day will give strength and courage, which can withstand illness. The Grace of God will confer mental peace and so, good sleep and rest for the mind. Feel that you are a hundred per cent dependent on God; He will look after you and save you from harm and injury. When you go to bed, offer thankful homage to Him for guiding and guarding you throughout the day. When a friend offers you a cigarette or some one gives you a glass of water, you say immediately, "Thank you;" how much more gratitude should you evince to God who watches you and wards off all harm threatening to overwhelm you. Activity must be dedicated to God, the Highest Good. Then, it will provide health of body and mind.

The body is a chariot, wherein God is installed, being taken along in procession. Let us consider some points on which we have to be vigilant, in order to avoid breakdowns on the road: Fast one day in the week. This is good for the body as well as for the country. Do not eat a dozen plantains, half a *dozen puris* and drink a quart of milk and call it a fast! Take only water, so that all the dirt is washed away. Do not crave for fruit juice or other liquids. Even physical machinery is given rest; they cannot run forever, continuously. What then shall we say of this delicately organised human body! It is not a sign of culture to overvalue the body, by over indulging in its whims. It is a sign of barbarism.

Birds and beasts have better eating habits

The older generation in this land used to take some quantity of rice soaked in curds, first meal in the morning. It is good *Saathwik* food; or, they drank some *raagi* gruel, which is equally good. Cattle are better; dogs have better eating habits. If a dog has fever, it will refuse food; but, man ignores even the warnings of the doctor and eats on the sly! Through dieting alone, birds and beasts set their health allright! But, man lives on tablets and pills and injections, after venturing into forbidden realm, so far as eating and drinking are concerned. Drink large quantities of water, boiled and cooled, not during meals, but some time before and after. Only the healthy person can afford to forget the body and dedicate his thoughts to God, and derive *Aanandha* therefrom.

The mind is the eleventh sense and like the other ten, one must reduce it to the status of an obedient instrument, in the hands of the intellect. Eat at regular intervals, according to a well-established time-table. Move about and fill the day with activity, so that food is well digested. Develop biting hunger, before sitting down for a meal.

Now, many do not know what it is to be hungry or thirsty. Wait until you get the call, before you load the stomach again. The rich are under a great handicap, in this respect. And women, who are petted so much that they feel physical work to be demeaning!

Contentment is the best tonic

Illness is the inevitable result of idleness and indulgence; health is the inevitable consequence of a tough hard life. If every one decides to carry on all personal services themselves, rather than depend on servants or helpers, the health situation will definitely improve and hospitals will have much less work. Keeping the mind fixed on God and good ideas and things also helps health. Keep the eye, ear, tongue, hands and feet under restraint. Don't read enervating or exciting stuff; don't attend film shows which exhaust or inflame the mind. Don't lose faith in yourself, you are the Divine encased in the body. Contentment is the best tonic; why inflict on yourself the disease of greed and consume tonics to get strength, and to hanker further? Use the body as a boat to cross the ocean of life, with devotion and detachment as the two oars.

Do not spend much thought on the body; some people worry always about health, and they are never satisfied with the care they bestow on the body. Be in the sun; let the sun's rays penetrate into the home, let them fall upon the body for some time, let them warm and illumine clothes and food; that will suffuse them with health.

There are some who are puzzled at the sight of a hospital here. They imply that everything here should be done through some miracle or some strange inexplicable manner! It also implies that no one who has come here should fall ill or die. I have no desire that you should live; or fear that you may die. It is you that decide your condition. All have to die, sooner or later. No one will be anxious to have the same dress on for years and years. Death is but the casting off of old clothes. When even *Avathaars* leave the body after the Task is fulfilled, how can man be saved from inevitable dissolution? The Hospital is for those who believe in the doctor and in drugs. It is faith that matters, that cures. It also serves to accommodate those who are too ill to move about, but, yet come over to this place for cure. Those who are in the Hospital will also hear the *Pranava*, the *Samkeertan* and the *Bhajan* and benefit by the spiritual vibrations that fill the air in this Prashaanthi Nilayam.

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You should cultivate an attitude of inseparable attachment to the Lord, who is your very self. If He is a flower, you should feel yourself a bee that sucks its honey; if He is a tree, be a creeper that clings to it; if a cliff, then feel that you are a cascade running over it; if He is the sky, be a tiny star that twinkles in it; above all, be conscious of the truth that you and He are bound by Supreme Love. If you feel this acutely, not with the gross intelligence, but with the subtle intelligence, then, the journey will be quick and the goal can be won.

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