

21. Good health and goodness

Health is the essential pre-requisite for success in all aspects of life, for realising the four ideals that should guide humans---namely, moral living, prosperity, fulfilling beneficial desires and liberation from grief. Everywhere man seeks to live happily and peacefully but happiness and peace are not won from worldly activities. The body that yearns to be happy and secure, is subject to disease, decay and death. The Dweller, the self, within the body, is however not born, nor does it die. It is *the Aathma*, God. The body is the temple of God. Hence it is the duty of man to keep the temple in good condition.

Health is necessary for gaining this world and the next, for earning worldly and other worldly progress, to realise the very purpose for which the Self has embodied itself in this human form, namely, to become aware of its source, the *Paramaathma*. In order to attain this goal, the ideals of righteousness, prosperity, moral desire and release from grief have to be practised with the help of a sound mind in a sound body.

What are the main causes of ill-health? Millions of living beings grouped as species dwell on the earth; they sustain themselves by means of food secured from Nature, as provided by Nature. It is only man that is an exception. In order to cater to his palate and other senses, he changes the composition and characteristics of the things provided by nature and prepares, through the process of boiling, frying and mixing, concoctions which have no vitality in them. Birds and beasts do not adopt such destructive methods. They eat things raw and consume the strength-giving vital essence. So, they do not fall victim to the many ills that man brings on himself.

Evil thoughts cause ill-health

Plant a boiled pulse in the soil; it won't sprout. How, then, can it contribute life to the living? The vitamins and proteins that are valuable ingredients are destroyed while it is cooked to please the palate! The billions of cells in the body are so inter-dependent that when one is weakened or damaged, all of them suffer. There is a limit and a balance which every limb and organ has to maintain. Insufficient or improper food will endanger this balance. An occasional cough helps to strengthen the lungs and to clear them of extraneous matter, but fits of coughing are signs of positive illness.

'Eat in moderation and live long.' This is the advice handed down through the ages by the seers of the past. This advice is seldom heeded. People fill themselves with such large quantities of food that they find it hard to rise from the eating plate. Ruining their digestive system by consuming heavy, rich foods, the affluent are proud when they host costly banquets. Those who know that physical health is the greatest treasure take great care to eat only *saathwik* food.

Uncooked food, nuts and fruits, germinating pulses are the best. Use these at least at one meal, say, for the dinner at night; this will ensure long life. And, long life is to be striven for in order that the years may be utilised for serving one's fellow-beings.

Evil thoughts cause ill-health. Anxiety, fear and tension also contribute their share. All these result from greed, greed to have more of things, of power and of fame. Greed results in sorrow and despair. Contentment can come only from a spiritual outlook. The desire for worldly goods has to be given up. One should not distinguish between "my work" and "work for God." All work should be worship. Whatever the reward, it is the gift of God. It is for our lasting good. If

this attitude is developed, suffering and pain can toughen us and help us to progress towards Divinity.

It is through pain that pleasure is gained. Darkness enables us to appreciate light. Death teaches us to love life. Diseases which torment man are many in number; of these, hatred, envy and egoism are the worst. Even doctors cannot cure them, for most of them suffer from these. One should develop equanimity and serenity, if one desires to be free from these diseases. Do not seek to listen to vile and vicious stories. This tendency reveals a diseased mind. What is heard is imprinted, like a carbon copy, through the ear, on the heart. One is injuring oneself through indulgence in this evil habit.

Be vigilant about food habits

Anger is another enemy of health. It injects poison into the blood stream and brings about profound transformation which damages it. Two women, who were neighbours turned into bitter enemies on account of a dispute over a very trivial incident. The cow belonging to one woman while going on the road dropped its dung in front of the other woman's house. The owner of the cow ran to collect the dung, while the other woman claimed that it belonged to her since it lay on her doorstep. From words they very nearly came to blows. Just then the other woman's little baby wailed from the cradle.

She rushed in to feed the baby and while the child was drawing in its food, she shouted most ferociously at her neighbour. Her anger poisoned her blood so much that the child died while drinking her milk! Another cause of ill-health is vice and vile conduct. People believe that a wicked person need not be a diseased person but most diseases are mental illness, fundamentally.

Doctors, too, have to deal with patients sweetly and softly and consider their profession as one calling for dedication to their fellowmen. It is best to preserve one's health by good thoughts and good deeds. It is best to be vigilant about food habits. Coconut kernel, coconut water, sprouting pulses, uncooked or half cooked vegetables, and greens are good for health.

Try earnestly to live long, without falling into the hands of medical practitioners. When they give you one injection, they keep another ready to counteract its reactions! While trying to cure one disease, they cause a dozen more. Moreover, the drugs they recommend are mostly spurious, since manufacturers want to amass a fortune by hook or by crook. Most illnesses can be cured by simple living, simple exercises and by intelligent control of the tongue. Live long so that you witness the career of *the Avathaar* for years and years.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 30-9-1981

An empty iron box gets value when it contains jewels and valuables; then it is carefully guarded. The body too is honoured when it contains the jewel of an awakened consciousness and the valuables called virtues.

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