

54. The jewel in the iron safe

*Good thoughts, good words, good deeds,
Listening good, seeing good, being good,
These confer good health on human folk.
This body is an iron box of paltry worth.
But, as in an iron box are kept jewels and gems,
Note I, in this paltry box, is kept the Aathma Divine,
This is the Truth, the Word of Sai.*

Health is the greatest blessing. Without it, man cannot do even the lightest work. Health is an indispensable requisite for progress in material, moral, political, economic, artistic and spiritual fields of life.

Food habits are of primary importance when health has to be secured and maintained. When these are not regulated, health suffers. 'No restraint, no success' is the axiom. Restraint, controls, limits have to be observed at every step. One should restrain the wild adventuresomeness of the tongue. Among the eight million four hundred thousand species of living beings, all except humans live on food as provided by Mother Nature. Man alone strives to make such food more palatable, more attractive to the senses of sight, touch and smell by boiling, frying and freezing and mixing, grinding and soaking. The consequence of this greed is ill-health and debility. One should realise that food materials, as offered by nature, are really more beneficial. When heat is applied, they lose the vitality yielding components and cannot come strength and efficiency. The person ages fast and loses the sprightliness of youth. Catering to the cravings of the tongue and swallowing heavy foods three or four times a day can only add to the heap. Regular and limited intakes alone can enable a person to discharge one's duties.

Each one is a pilgrim, body is the rest-house

A restless mind is another important source of ill-health. Man is constantly afflicted with some source of worry or other. He is never free from anxiety. Why? Because he is identifying himself with the body. How did he acquire this body? Through his past activities and deeds. What were they caused by? By the twin pulls of love and hate. How did they originate? They were born out of the entanglement in duality, in the opposites. And, why does he get snared by them? Ignorance of the Truth, the ONE.

You must know that each one is a pilgrim and each life is but a stage in the journey towards the city of liberation. This body is a rest-house, in which we stay for a short time, during the pilgrimage. The mind is the caretaker, the watchman in the choultry where we rest. We are not to treat him as if he is master or owner. But, we ought to take care that the house we are privileged to occupy is not damaged or polluted. We have to take good care of it and its furnishings, and treat the watchman politely.

The pilgrim is either helped or handicapped by the antics of the mind. The mind has as its warp and woof, desire or thirst for some thing or other, getting some gain or avoiding some loss. Desire arises from attachment, often the consequence of delusion. Desire distorts and denigrates

the mind. It keeps the mind incessantly agitated. No sheet of water can be calm when stones are dropping on it and if there is a perpetual shower of desires, the mind too will be pitifully restless.

The *aanandha* (bliss) which emanates from the *Aathma* in man has, in fact, to be stored, with the help of the *buddhi* as channel, in the reservoir, the mind. That is its genuine function. But, if the reservoir has many cracks and crevices, namely the senses, the *aanandha* will be frittered away, and the reservoir will be rendered dry. When the hunger of the senses is sought to be appeased, the mind becomes vacillating and wayward. The mind is the master of the senses. That is its legitimate role. The senses are the servants. When the master serves the servants, he loses his self-respect and falls in the esteem of all.

Good health depends on good thoughts

In the Raamaayana story, the Queen yields to the selfish wiles of her maid and as a consequence, her lord King Dasaratha lost his life. Raama who was as her very life-breath was exiled into the forest, her son disowned her and drew on herself the condemnation of the Kingdom of Ayodhya. The story is an allegory. Dasaratha is the human body with the five senses of perception and the five senses of action---the ten chariots or *dasha-ratha*. He wedded the Queen, the Mind, and the mind yielded to the servant and caused the downfall.

The one effective way to conquer all sources of physical and mental disease and debility is awareness of *one's Aathmic Reality*. That will bring about an upsurge of Love and Light, for, when one recognises that he is the *Aathma*, he cognises the same *Aathma* in all, he shares the joy and grief of all, he partakes of the strength and weakness of all. When one yearns for the happiness and prosperity of all mankind, one is blessed with the wisdom and strength to mark out the way and lead men towards it. In every one, the person sees his God. Every act of his will be as pure, as sincere and as sacred as an offering to God.

Health does not depend on medicine. Good words, good manners, good sight, good thoughts--these are essential. What can even powerful or costly medicines do if one is ill with bad thoughts and bad feelings? On the other hand, virtuous living, beneficial thoughts, elevating ideals and righteous conduct can confer not only health, but what is even more precious, *Aathmaanandha*, the Ecstatic Awareness of the Reality itself.

Discourse on the Annual Day of Shri Sathya Sai Hospital, Prashaanthi Nilayam, 20-11-1982.

When Tukaaraam was asked how man can keep the monkey mind from running after sensuous pleasures, he replied to the enquirer, "Let the monkey run; you keep quiet where you are; do not let the body go along with the monkey-mind." Tell the mind, "I shall not give you the body as your servant." Then, the mind will desist and it can be defeated.

Sathya Sai Baaba