

26. Good Health Is Our Greatest Wealth

Till you cross the river, a boat is necessary. So also, till you reach the divine destination, you need the human body as your vehicle. Be healthy, do not eat impure or unclean food and impair your health.

Students,

Even after having attained the sacred human birth, it is very unfortunate if you are not able to put your life on the right path. The *gopikas* were pure and sacred-minded and were used to worshipping God with a name and form. Prahlada was also pure and sacred-minded, and he was used to worshipping the formless God. Both were ideal examples for these two paths. People who want to develop themselves along the path of the *Atma* must have good health and, for this purpose, the control of food is essential. By eating clean food, we can get a clean mind and through a clean mind, we can get a clear idea of the goal. Through such a clean concept of the *Atma*, we will be able to get rid of the illusion of *maya*. Through this method, the knot that is present in our heart will open up, and this is the basis for getting a divine vision. We should not think that the importance that is being given to the aspect of food is unnecessary. For all types of *Yoga*—*Pranayama*, *Niyama*, *Pratyahara*, *Samadhi*, etc.—correct type of food is the most important basis. You may have some doubt as to why we should give so much importance to a minor matter like the intake of food when there are so many other important things. Without having purity of mind, we cannot achieve even a small thing. By the unclean food that we take in, we expose our body to unnecessary ills. In creation, there are 84 *lakhs* of different kinds of

jivas. Amongst those 84 *lakhs* of living things, man alone cooks his food and eats it. All the other types of living beings take their food in the natural uncooked form. By taking to natural food, these *jivas* promote their longevity. Because man cooks his food before he eats, the life force that is contained in the food is partly destroyed. There is an example for this. When we take some seeds and put them in the ground along with manure, we get good trees. But if the same seeds are boiled or cooked and then planted in the earth, we will not get any plants at all. This means that by frying or cooking, the *sathwik* life force that is present in the seeds is destroyed. By eating such food, man makes himself liable to several types of diseases. Because man eats such cooked food, he also becomes distant from *sadhana*. It is because of this that in ancient times, *rishis* and devotees of God were eating only uncooked food in its natural form. This is the reason why *Bhagavad Gita* in its 17th and 18th chapters has described *sathwik* food as that which has been offered to God. We use the word *sathwik* food to convey different meanings in different parts of the world. We generally think that fruits, milk, vegetables, etc., without too much salt or pepper constitute *sathwik* food. To think so is natural, but with this feeling, we should not eat too much of this kind of food. We should eat only a limited quantity of even *sathwik* food. Alcoholic drinks and meat eating promote *rajo guna*. *Bhagavad Gita* has been teaching us that we should eat only *sathwik* food and that too, in a limited measure. There is a vast amount of air around us and just because there is air, are we consuming too much of this air? We take it to the extent to which it is necessary for us. Simply because sacred Ganges is available to us in plenty, we do not go and consume too much of its water. We take water only in a limited quantity when we need it. In that manner, human beings have been consuming what is required for them; but when it comes to the question of food, why is it that we eat too much and in exces-

sive quantities? If we eat more than what we need, we will have trouble digesting our food. In order that we may digest too much food, we will have to spend two or three hours in a wasteful manner. Further, it would also imply that we are depriving someone else of the food that he might need more than us. In this manner, we will be committing two wrongs. Be that as it may, such eating will promote ill health. Limited consumption of food will promote a clean and pure mind.

We now come to food that has already been offered to God. Neither matter nor food is created by man. The entire creation is the property of the Lord, and to eat this food, without offering it to the Lord would amount to ingratitude. In the 15th chapter of *Gita* this has been expressed by saying that food must be offered to the Lord before one eats it. It is said that God in the form of Vysvanara is present in you and is consuming the food. If the food that you are eating is offered to God in the first instance, it becomes *prasad* and all the blemish that may be contained in the food will be removed. So, we say that limited food and *sathwik* food which is already offered to God will enable us to have a clean mind. For our bondage and for our liberation, our mind alone is responsible; and if we promote a clean mind, we will have no problems. Every small task that we may undertake depends on our mind. If we have to reach a destination, we have to reach through our mind.

When we take our food, we are taking it through our tongue; but we have five different sense organs. In spite of this, we think that we are consuming food only through the palate. Many people wonder why they are getting bad thoughts, although they are consuming only pure and *sathwik* food. There is something here to which you have to give a great deal of thought. *Sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha* are the five senses in us. Whatever we take in can enter our

body by way of any of the sensory organs, namely, ear, skin, eye, tongue or nose. In a superficial manner, we think we are taking the food only through the palate, and we are not giving any thought to the kind of food that we are taking through the other organs. When we say that we should accept only *sathwik* food, it refers to food that we accept through all the organs. Our eyes must accept only vision that is sacred and *sathwik*. We should use our eyes to see only the sacred creation of the Lord. Just because we have eyes, we should not use them to see everything without any control. Sometimes when we look at certain things, the organs within us may become uncontrollable. This is why, the *sadhakas* have laid down that men and women should not look at each other too much, as it will promote *rajo guna*. We should use our eyes only to look at sacred things. It is because of this that the *gopikas* were not willing to discuss too much with Uddhava. They used a bee as an intermediary while speaking with Uddhava. They were worried that their mind might get distorted if they looked and talked with Uddhava. So, they adopted this procedure.

The next is the process of listening or the food that we take through our ears. We should not indulge in blaming others, criticising others and listening to unnecessary things. All this constitutes unsacred food. We should also not listen to things intended to ridicule others. We should be prepared to listen only to sacred thoughts of the Lord. We should not be prepared to listen to the blame heaped on others.

Then comes the process of smell, the food we take in through the nose. You should take only sacred smell which is associated with divine aspects. Good smell does not mean scent or perfume. Good smell connotes sacred smell associated with the divine. Thus, through all the organs, we should try to take in only sacred and pure things. Next one is the sense of

touch. Our ancients have prescribed that contact should be only with divine aspects. When we sit down for *dhyana*, we use a small plank and sit on that so that there is no contact with the earth. It is not possible for us to realise what happens by contact that exists between us and the earth. Those who do not recognise this truth, ridicule these habits.

There is an example for this. This is a flower, and it drops down, if I let it go. What is responsible for its falling? It comes down because the earth has the power to attract. We can see the flower that has been left in the air. We can see the earth, but we are not able to see the attraction that pulls down the flower. Just because we are not able to see this power, it is folly for us to argue that the earth has no power to attract. In the same manner, there are several types of attractive powers in the aspect of the divine. The creation that we see around us has the strength of sound, strength of movement, strength of being permanent and prosperous, the strength of *maya* and many other different types of strength. This is why it is said that, when you are in *dhyana*, your body should not be in contact with anyone else. There are also other meanings for this. Wherever there is dirt and unclean atmosphere, there would be bad and filthy bacteria, while in a clean place where the atmosphere is good and clean, there will be clean bacteria. When we touch an unclean body, there is a possibility of the disease causing germs flowing into us. Further, that unclean and unsacred body may communicate a part of the uncleanness to us. One body and another are like magnets in this case. This is the reason why individuals who take the path of *sadhana*, should keep away from unclean surroundings and objects. It is in this context that our ancients have advised that we should go and touch the feet of sacred and elderly people so that the sacredness that is contained in their body is transmitted to us. Simi-

larly, if you touch an unsacred body, the impurity or unsacredness can also enter into you.

It is only when you restrict the intake through all your organs to sacred things that you will really be taking only *sathwik* food. If you take *sathwik* food through your mouth in the form of fruits and milk and use your eyes to see all bad things, there is no use of such a partial restriction. It is because of this that the *gopikas* of those days were promoting the aspect of *sathsanga*. Everyday, they used to gather in a *sathsanga*, or a congregation of good people, and spend time talking about Krishna. This is why it has been said that out of *sathsanga*, you will have good qualities, and out of that, you will get detachment and out of detachment, you will get a steady and unwavering mind. This kind of *sathwic* food through all the organs will be helpful to a large extent.

While Chanda and Amarka were causing a lot of hardship to Prahlada and uttering harsh words, he was determined to keep away from the harsh words. Prahlada always uttered the sacred, “*Om Namō Narayana*” so loudly that he would not hear anything else. When he was alone, Prahlada used to look at the exquisite beauty that is contained in God’s creation, but when his father or *Gurus* came, he used to close his eyes. Even when his father spoke to him, he used to close his eyes because he was worried that if he looked at his father, bad ideas would get into him. The meaning of a sacred saying like, “*Yad bhaavan thad bhavathi*” is that the thoughts will determine the action—and of “*Brahma vid Brahmaiva bhavati*” is that if you have divine ideas, you will merge with *Brahman*. These are, therefore, very important. After Hiranya Kashyapa was killed, Lord Nara Simha was preparing to leave and Prahlada started shivering. Lord Nara Simha asked if Prahlada was trembling because of the fearful and strange appearance of God. To this

question, Prahlada said that he was certainly not afraid of looking at the beautiful face of God and listening to the beautiful voice of God. He said that there was no chance whatsoever of his being afraid because of God's presence. Prahlada said that he was worried that the Lord would leave after giving him a sacred vision and that he would be left back alone on earth. Prahlada said that he cannot live in the world—even for a moment—without the Lord and that this was causing him a great deal of worry.

Recognising the great sacredness that is contained in God's vision, His touch and His speech, we should decide to accept through all the five organs, only sacred food. Here, many people may have a doubt as to what is sacred and *sath-wik* food. I will explain this aspect. Some people think that it is good to eat a banana or a coconut. Neither coconut nor banana are bad in any way. Our ancients considered the coconut as a sacred food. Gradually, when we look at the coconut, it reminds us of our head. It also has two eyes and one mouth. It also has a patch of hair. Some people think that it is a form of Shiva because it has three eyes. In fact, in certain festivals, a coconut is decorated and people perform *puja* to it. What is the reason for our giving so much importance to a coconut? It is useful to examine this, even in a worldly sense. Doctors have examined this fruit and come to the conclusion that it has very valuable constituents. It is believed that this fruit has nearly 57% of fat, 15% of powdery material, another 15% of watery substance, seven or eight percent of solid matter. The remaining eight percent is pulp. The *rishis* believed this to be a very sacred fruit. An unripe coconut is also a sacred fruit. Whatever we may eat, provided it does not contain too much salt, chili or acid; and if we eat in the right proportions, it may be described as *sathwic*. The ideal proportion is two parts of solid food, one part of liquid and one part of air. This kind of food will help us

a great deal in our *sadhana* and we will have good health. It is in this context that it has been said that health is our true wealth. A healthy body will have a healthy mind. However, today man is not accepting any of these good principles and he is subjecting himself to a lot of disease and harm.

An individual who wants to attain self-realisation and secure the vision of the Lord, should first give up bad listening, bad vision and bad food. From that day, he will have moved closer to his objectives. So, you must strive to remove the blemish in you. A sinner may change but a sin will never change. These bad qualities are causing you a lot of harm. You must strive to bring a change in the society around you. Youth like you have the capacity and energy to achieve many great things. You must perform *sadhana* to promote your spiritual and mental wealth. You must also try and control the bad actions that are emanating in the society. You must first rectify yourself and then try to rectify the society around you. Many of our scriptures have taught us that good type of food is essential. Just to relieve your hunger or fill the basket of your stomach, you should not eat whatever you see and wherever your feet drag you. Even if it is some trouble, you must search for good and clean food. But young people of today do not have such patience. We need not go so far. If the coffee to which you are habituated is delayed even by a few minutes, you get very irritated and excited. You should make an attempt to get rid of such weakness. If you cannot control your actions when you are young, you cannot do so when you grow old. While one is young and strong, he must try to control the organs. This is the right path which you must adopt. Your actions must be undertaken in the thought of God. I hope that you will be able to take such a sacred path and lead a good life.