

53. The doctor's profession

HEALTH and happiness go together. Happiness is a vain dream if health is absent. The *Shruthis* (holy scriptures) declare that health is very basic quality for man, since without it he cannot realise any of the four goals of life, right doing, right desiring, right earning and final release. A sound mind needs a sound body; the one reacts on the other. The world is supposed to be only the projection of the mind, when the mind is inoperative during deep sleep, the world too is inoperative and non-existent. The mind too has to be healthy. It should not be clogged by greed, envy, hate or pride. It should not be polluted and poisoned by antisocial inhuman plans and projects. It should be calm and clear, so that thought can see into its depths and get rid of the evil feelings and tendencies it evokes.

Virtue is the panacea for both body and mind. The virtuous person can be both healthy and happy. How is virtue to be cultivated? How can it express itself in daily practice? Through service to living beings, through *seva* (voluntary selfless service). Virtue must flow through the triple channel of love, mercy and detachment, in order to feed the roots of *seva*. In order to urge humans into the path of mutual sympathy, continuous compassion and concrete service, they have been endowed with the instinct of gregariousness. Man is a social animal. Humans find solitary living, unnatural and miserable. The *Ashraamas* (monasteries) of ancient times were academies where mutual cooperation and loving service were encouraged. The pupils worked as a group, tended cattle, served the household of the *Guru* and helped one another in all respects.

God works through a doctor full of love

Doctors are, really speaking, the most important class of *sevaks*, under present conditions. Theirs is indeed a noble calling. When *seva* is rendered with love, intelligence and earnestness, it leads persons nearer and nearer to Divinity, for it draws unto itself the Grace of God. This is the reason why the scriptures elevate the *vaidhya* (doctor) to the status of God. "*Vaidhyo Naaraayano Harih*"---"*The doctor is Naaraayana (God), He is Hari.*" He is *Hari*, the remover or destroyer, since he destroys hurdle on the path of man to *saadhana* (spiritual discipline). If the doctor is full of love and compassion, God works through him. The doctor is no longer he but it is *Naaraayana* who manipulates his fingers and dispenses through him.

Doctors, therefore, have to endeavour to become the receptacles of Divine Power during their healing process. How can they heal, when they are themselves ill, either in body or mind? When their minds are innocent and contented, a smile will spontaneously shine in their faces and their words will be soft, sweet and tender---softer than any pharmaceutical balm. The manner and mien of the physician are more effective in drawing out the latent sources of strength in the patient, than the most powerful drug. A prayerful atmosphere of humility and veneration will go a long way to help the cure. We may say that the behaviour, the voice, the mien of the doctor count for fifty per cent of the cure, the drugs and their efficacy manage the other half.

Doctors have to practise with devotion

Note that the science of medicine, practised by doctors in India is known by the sacred name of *Ayurvedha*---the science of healthy longevity Its source too is as divine as the source of the *Vedhas*! It has to be studied with as much awe and veneration as the *Vedhas* are learnt, at the feet of the *guru*. It has to be practised with as much devotion and dedication as *Vedhic* ceremonies

and recitations are fulfilled. The *Vedha* or knowledge that confers *Aayu* (longevity) is *Aayur-Vedha*. It can prolong life, preserve and protect life from hazards.

The Ayurvedha deals not only with the curing of illness but it also deals with the prevention of disease. Absence of mental ease and equanimity leads to what we correctly call disease. One sacred duty of the doctor is to advise persons on how to preserve health and prevent disease. He has to be vigilant in society to discover and suppress every tendency in *Aahaar* and *Vihaar* (food habits and recreational activities) by which diseases are developed. The dress worn by humans, the houses where they live and the areas where they are situated, have to be tidy and clean. The food that is taken has to supply all elements needed to keep the body strong enough to resist illness. Even if it falls short a little in this respect, health can be maintained if it is unpolluted, pure and holy. The atmosphere breathed in, the water taken in, the ground lived on, the animals and plants that surround--all have maleficent microbes that may cause illness, if the mind and body are not equipped with powerful resistance armour. Exercise, bathing, washing, cleaning, etc., are prescribed for this purpose. The body is the boat on which we voyage across the ocean of *samsaar* (worldly life) and it has to be kept trim and sea-worthy. The voyager too has to be strong, confident and courageous.

The current belief is that medicine is to be valued for its validity during illness. Its use ends with the cure. But this point of view has to change. Medicine is used to see that one does not fall ill, not so much as to raise him up when he falls, just as the purpose of truth is to so live that one is not subjected to birth again.

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Just as you prescribe minimum qualifications for every profession, the minimum qualification for Grace is surrender of egoism, control over senses and regulated aahaara and vihaara (food and recreation).

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