

19. Food and character

ALL men everywhere are of one species. Yet, man hates man; one religion is opposed to another; one race feels superior to another; one country avoids contact with another. How does this conflict arise? When one delves deep into this question, the answer becomes clear.

Everything in creation has five properties. The first three are *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* (Being, Awareness, Bliss) and the last two are *Ruupa* and *Naama* (Form and Name), which are lent to the thing only temporarily. They are subject to modification but the first three Being, Awareness, Bliss are inherent, unchanging characteristics. In the language of *Vedhaantha*, the three are named *Asthi*, *Bhaathi*, and *Priya* (existence, shining or expressing and loving). They are the innate qualities of every manifestation of the Divine. The last of the three is *Aanandha* (Divine Bliss). Every human being is an embodiment, repository and vehicle of *Aanandha*.

The awareness of this *Aanandha* (Bliss) is the goal of man, the consummation of human life. But, man seeks pleasure and happiness from objects through the senses and attains the low material *Aanandha*, not the supreme *Aanandha* he ought to win. It must be said that the *Aanandha* attained through the objective world or through subjective means is only a fractional expression of the *Aanandha* which merges in *Brahman* (Supreme Reality) grants. We speak of hot water, though heat is not a quality of water, fire has given it the heat. So, too, objective *Aanandha* or subjective *Aanandha* are rendered so, through the grace of *Brahma-aanandha* (Supreme Divine Bliss).

Food prevents or promotes emotions and passions

Man prides himself that he has earned *Aanandha* himself by his effort. It is sugar that makes the bland globules of flour into sweet Laddu. The grace of the Ground of all Being can alone confer sweetness or *Aanandha*. The stars are proud that they shed light on a darkened world but the bright moonlight renders starlight too faint to be noticed. The moon's pride, too, is humbled when the sun illumines the sky. *Brahma-aanandha* is the Sun. This does not mean that one should ignore starlight and moonlight or *Vishaya aanandha* and *Vidhya aanandha*---*Aanandha* derived from Nature and from spiritual experiential knowledge. They are steps, stages, samples. While valuing them as such, the goal of *Brahma-aanandha* has to be relentlessly pursued.

How, then, can man earn that Awareness, that *Aanandha*? What *Saadhana* (spiritual discipline) has he to adopt? Though men are all equally subject to birth, life and death, though all are of one kind, why do they allow the *Aanandha* which is the right of each to slip away through hatred and conflict? Why is the demon prevailing over the Divine in man? The answer has been deluding man for ages.

Well! *Aham* (ego) is the cause. The narrow limited self, the ego, is at the root of the evil. Probing the problem a little deeper, I would say that the nature of the food relished is primarily responsible. Food is of three qualities *Saathwik*, *Raajasik*, and *Thaamasik* (leading to purity, passion and inertia). Some consume *Saathwik-Raajasik* or *Thaamasik-Raajasik* food, or they change from one type to another, for better or worse. Since food alleviates or arouses, prevents or promotes emotions and passions, it moulds the behaviour, conduct and attitudes of men.

Saadhaks have to be careful about food consumed

Raavana and Vibheeshana, two brothers born of the same parents, had diametrically opposite natures because of the food they grew upon. Raavana relished *Raajasik* food while Vibheeshana

stuck to *Saathwik*. Fellow-feeling is difficult when the same quality of food is not preferred. When both live on *Raajasik* food, though they may have the same nature, friendship cannot last. Envy and hatred will soon break the bond. The *Saathwik* nature will free man from these evils and purify his mind, preparing him for the journey to God. For, God is *Sathwa* (pure).

Many slide from the *Saathwik* nature into the *Raajasik* where the ego predominates. They slide away from God too, for where the ego swells in pomp and pride, God cannot reside. They may parade other reasons for their losing hold of God but the fault lies in their own self.

What exactly is *Saathwik* food? Food that confers *Aanandha* to the body, mind and heart is *Saathwik*, that which sustains holy living; that which keeps one light, even at the end of the meal. The *Saathwiks* are satisfied with one meal a day. *Raajasik* nature demands continuous feeding on hot stuff tasting sour, salty or pungent. *Thaamasiks* appreciate cold, stale, acrid tastes. The grosser parts of the food consumed are eliminated. The less gross parts build up muscles and bones. The subtle parts make up the nerves and the mind. Therefore, *Saadhaks* have to be extra-careful about the quality of food they consume.

Be clothed in divine qualities to approach God

Pungency in food heightens feelings of pugnacity, aggression and vindictiveness in men, against those who oppose, disagree with or disappoint them. Such men are worse than scorpions and snakes, sharp swords or serrated saws. It is tragic that factional conflicts arise even among persons claiming to be devotees of God. Often, such men behave as if they are desecrating God by deserting Him. When their desires do not fructify as and when they arise, when their faults and failings are laid down before them in order to warn them, or when they are directed to give up the wrongs they are fascinated by, they turn away from God in a fit of fury! There are two types of men--the *Amaras* (the godly) and the *Asuras* (the demonic). The *Raajasik* persons are *Asuras*. The Geetha directs us to adopt, as the very first *Saadhana*, the rule: *Adhweshtaa Sarva bhoothaanaam* ("Do not hate any single being"). To approach God, one must be clothed in divine qualities. When it is sinful to hate a fellow-being, what shall we say about hating God? Live in the love of *God--Sthithi-Mathi-Bhakthi* (stability, awareness-communion). Devotion arises in the constant mind, not in the agitated, kaleidoscopic mind. Allah showers Grace only on those who surrender wholly. The purification of the senses of perception and the senses of action, the mind and the intellect and the sublimation of the ego-consciousness will happen spontaneously, once the attitude of total surrender is strengthened. That which we consume through the mouth is food. We consume also through the eye, the ear, the nose and the skin. That food too has to be *Saathwik*, purifying and not pungent or stale and corrupt.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 25 July 1983.

Education is now sought after, more for securing a means of livelihood.

The attempt of many parents and their children is to learn some skill which will give them a good job, in a factory or business establishment or bank, on a decent salary.

Of course, man must live and live comfortably. So, it is necessary that some useful skill is mastered. But, man needs things much more satisfying, much more essential, than comfort.

*He must have faith in himself, so that he may respect himself. This
Aathmavishwaas (trust in the Self) lies at the very root of joy.*

Sri Sathya Sai