

Nectar of Governance

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Part 10: Healthy life by design



An intriguing discussion between Yudhistir, the elder brother of Pandavas, and a Yaksha, a celestial person in the form of a crane, in Mahabharata gives very deep knowledge about various aspects of life. There were totally 33 questions and one of those questions is about the most important concern of the present modern man. Yaksha asked, “What is the best of all gains?” (*lābhānām uttamam kim syāt*) Yudhistir very nicely answered the question by saying, “the best of all gains is

health.” (*lābhānām śhreya ārogyam*) That answer was very convincing and immediately approved. The dialogue between Yudhistir and the Yaksha was not of some casual nature, but of life and death situation. Right answers would keep Yudhistir alive, while wrong answers would cause him to fall. The fact that he not only survived, but also gave life to all the remaining brothers who were dead due to the mystic power of Yaksha proves the correctness of the answers by him.

The general saying that “health is wealth” also concurs with Mahabharata’s statement, for everyone considers that wealth is a big gain. However, people in general have meager idea about the importance of health, which reflects in their approach towards health. In this context, we may know a short story that actually reflects the real situation. There was a very old lady in a village, who was engaged in searching something outside her house. One passerby, out of curiosity, asked her about the matter. He was stunned to hear that she was searching for her earring that was lost inside the home, but she was searching for it outside as there was darkness inside. Though, it appears ridiculous, our present situation is no different than this story. In the modern world, people die of eating, rather than starvation. People are losing health with irregular, unhygienic and unrestricted eating habits like eating at roadside, parties, hotels. It means that their health is lost at different eating places, but they are searching for the lost health in hospitals. Is it meaningful? Certainly not.

Bhagavad-Gita (3.14) clearly states that our bodies subsist on grains (*annād bhavanti bhūtāni*). And the purpose of maintaining bodies, especially human form of bodies, is to execute religious life. This has been clearly stated by Vedas as, “*aharasudhau sattva-suddhih sattva-suddhau dhruvasmritih smritilambhe sarva-granthinam vipramoksah*”. It means that by the performance of sacrifice, eatables are sanctified, and by eating sanctified food, one’s very existence becomes purified; by the purification of existence, finer tissues in the memory becomes sanctified, and when memory is sanctified, one can think of path to liberation. It is the result of well-designed activity. Bhagavad-Gita (6.16) also warns all the human beings on this aspect by saying,

*nāty-aśnatas tu yogo 'sti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ
na cāti-svapna-śīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna*

“O Arjuna! There is no possibility of one becoming a yogi if one eats too much or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough.” Hence regulated habits of eating in the name of “*yuktahara*” are recommended in Bhagavad-Gita (6.17).

Actually, holistic health care by an individual comes under self-governance process. Any person who is well versed with planned healthcare practices can become a true follower of any governing process or can also become true leader, because, he sees the health as the most important requirement for any achievement. People in general, are not conversant with good health practices, checks and balances and diet strategies, but, are familiar with eating the food of their choice and consult a doctor when fallen sick. Animals living in jungle don’t have any veterinary doctor for treatment. Indeed, the number of animals in forests is much higher than the total number of human beings, yet they survive with simple natural processes that are known to them.

The first step towards a healthy and non-violence life style is to take only vegetarian food. Mahatma Gandhi, Abdul Kalam, Leo Tolstoy and many more celebrities are well known vegans. It doesn’t mean that all vegans can have very good health. It is a myth. Not only vegan food, but also regulated eating habits are the key for good health. The best method is to adopt “two meals per day” concept. Any additional eating should be managed with uncooked food like fruits, dry fruits and nuts. The most important point to borne in mind is to keep a minimum gap of 5 to 6 hours between two full meals. These basic practices

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regarding the food intake keeps one on healthy ground. The second important practice for vibrant health is to fast at least once in 15 days. Abstaining from food gives the body sufficient time to recoup from any system damages within. Animals adopt this simple process meticulously to recover from illness. In all religions, fasting is introduced as a religious practice, but the main motto is to offer good health

for all the followers. A leader should always encourage people to fast for good health. The third important step towards a healthy life is to exercise every day. Every member of a family should spend at least 30 to 45 minutes in some exercise till body profusely sweats. Regular exercise is rarely seen in one's life, which is the root cause of all illnesses. The next important healthy practice is to consume 3 to 4 liters of pure water every day. The final and foremost good practice for vibrant health is to have a cool mind, which is possible by selfless, devoted prayers to the God.

The person who cannot take care of his health will eventually fall short of all intelligence, thus making very poor contribution to the governance system. Hence, it is the prime duty of a leader to look into the health of not only the governing system, but also governed people. Healthcare, in true sense, is never breakdown maintenance of the body, but is a preventive maintenance. Health is only that wealth, which is not obtained by heredity, but only by hard work. Heaps of money cannot give one health, but only five-star treatment facilities. So, an intelligent person should endeavor first to be healthy than wealthy.
