



Self-Care is the Best Health-Care

By Mas Vidal

I would like to start with a great quote made by one of the greatest statesman in American history, Abraham Lincoln, who once said "*Government for the people by the people*", and who, according to Yogananda, was as a great yogi in a past life. So to paraphrase this, the people should be responsible for governing themselves. To break this down in the most unadorned manner, 'practice self-care!' and feel good about it as Lincoln also said, "*When I do good, I feel good. When I do bad, I feel bad. That's my religion*".

If you want to rely on any government to bail you out of your bad habits first, analyze the people who are involved, and secondly, scrutinize the many pitfalls of a healthcare system that try's to enroll people into taking drugs that often lead to addiction and a multitude of side-effects, furthermore the percentage of failed or unnecessary surgical procedures is quite high and not to mention the expensive payment plans. If all this sounds appealing then go for it and continue to follow the masses of brain washed people that are like ants chasing the crumbs with no real idea of what they are chasing. People in general and much less politicians really know what health is or how to achieve it. I often say.... the last people I want in charge of my health are government officials, lobbyist or corporate America. Healing begins in the family unit with parents setting the example for the children. However, each person must learn to create his or her own habits and practices that support good mind-body synergy.

Vedic wisdom encourages us to heal through self-effort or sadhana, which aims at reorienting the mind from patterned behavior into creative, original and a mindful awareness that involves living, breathing and feeling prana in all its glorious forms...air, food, and water. Although, the channels to receive prana must be open, flowing and receptive. Ayurveda refers to these as *srotas* (pranavaha, annavaha, and ambhuvaha). Lethargy does not work, paying everyone to do everything for us also does not work, we must be more active, we must bridge the mind-body relationship in practical self-care activities like massage, cooking, gardening, postural yoga and many other modalities that require your independent-fixed attention. I'm still astonished at how few people cook for themselves or even know how to? Or, how little time people create to take care of their body, their temple. This is precisely where the difference lies for many of us. Vedic wisdom teaches us to regard the body as a vessel, a

temporary container where consciousness is bound as a result of karma (actions), choices and desires. In the unconscious human (spiritually dormant), the body is their life and is the only means to living and experiencing the pleasures of life. One thought after the next is given to the idea of satisfying the sense pleasures, food, touch, praise etc. Ancient wisdom has taught us that prana goes where the mind goes and if the mind is focused on feeding every thought-desire and craving with some pleasure then we become trapped in the wheel of life, samsara. Chasing such cravings is like mental masturbation. Its never enough, just like sex without love, its a dead end for the soul and playing with this fire is what keeps the ego thriving. One of my favorite Vedic mystics Swami Rama Tirtha called it "cupidity", and he often said that the meaning of love in society is based on a thought, expectation or condition. However, when we allow prana to feed us either ayurvedically through air, food and water or yogically with the flow of devotion, you dance in fire of bliss as depicted in the eternal metaphor of Lord Shiva's Ananda tandava or dance of bliss. Good company (sangha) and serving humanity (seva) support our personal mind-body synergy (sadhana). The three must be intertwined as Vivekananda aptly put it, balance the head, hand and heart. The head is reference to the yogic path of jnana, the hand connects us to the path of karma yoga and the heart is sacred path of devotion or bhakti yoga. Ayurveda is a natural wisdom that performs miracles on our physical health that modern science will never quantify.

Ayurveda teaches us that our true nature is to live in relationship with Divine nature.

For years I have seen yogi's, teachers and all types of aspirants caught up in cookie cutter yoga or what I have called fixed formula yoga following some name-brand yoga with no original link to the deeper tradition or at the very least and understanding of what it truly means to salute the sun? Vedic (yoga & ayurveda) methods of self-care urge us to inquire into the nature of our existence to understand our unique distinctive qualities so that we may embrace an approach that brings benefit to our own piece of ecology as in our physical body. Nature's wisdom teaches us how to care for our own body with the idea that as you do, you improve the environment around you. When people do badly to themselves, naturally they feel bad and usually impart this back to the world around them. When a person embraces self-care they naturally reflect qualities of compassion and gratitude, encouraging others to do the same for themselves. A true and everlasting form of healthcare must begin with governance of our own head, hand and heart because they play a very vital part at improving this world. May we all do our best and let the Divine take care of the rest. Namaste ☺