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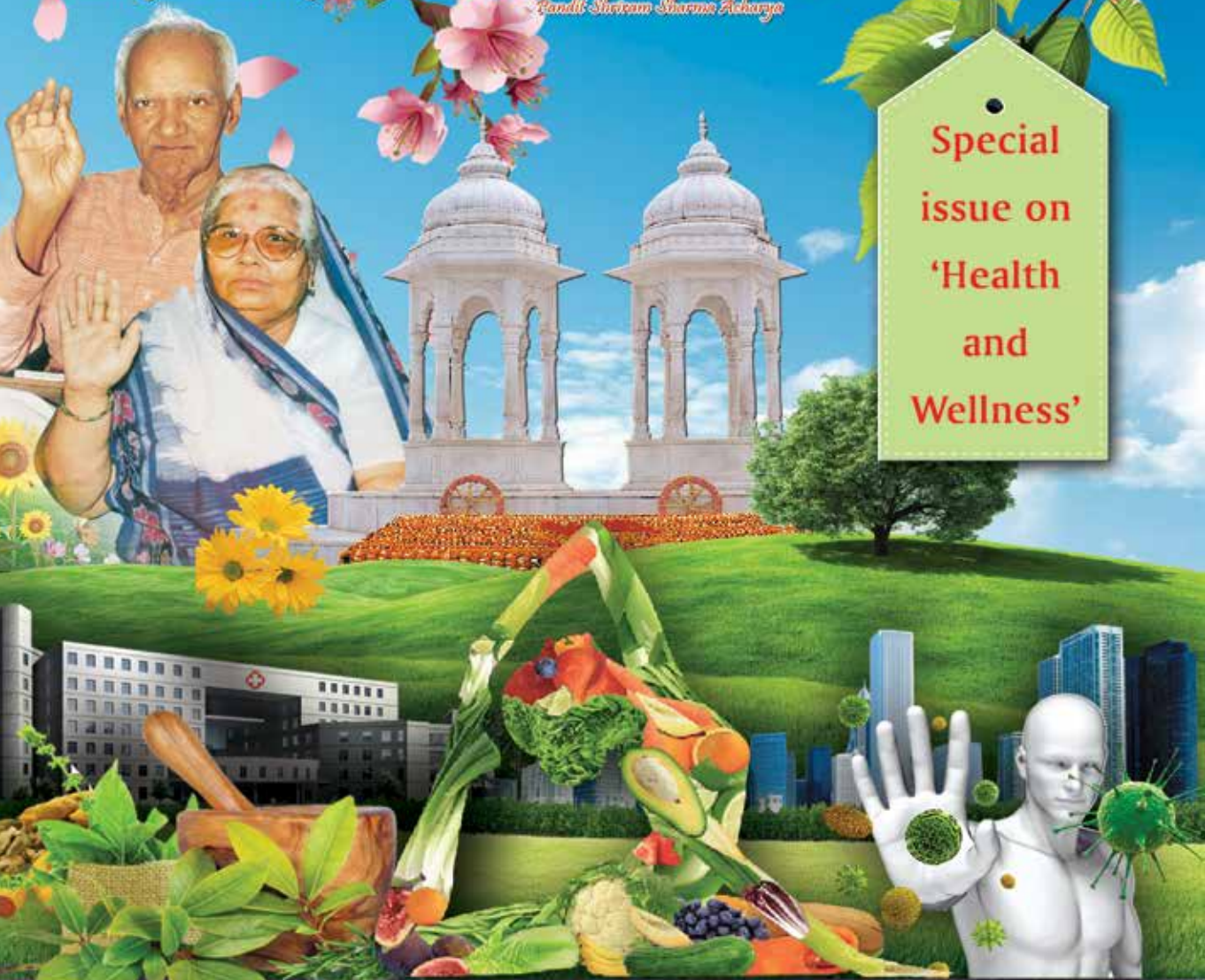
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# Akhand Jyoti

*Akhand Jyoti is not merely a magazine. It is an embodiment of my soul*  
—Ranadi Shivan Sharma Acharya

The Light Divine

Special  
issue on  
'Health  
and  
Wellness'



7 Follow Natural Lifestyle to Enjoy Long and Youthful Life

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47 Walking for Health



Natā yayoh śripatitām samīyuh, kadācidapyāsu daridravyāḥ |  
Mūkāśca vācaspatitām hi tābhyām, namo namaḥ śrī guru pādukābhyām ||

Meaning: My prostrations to the holy padukas (sandals) of my Guru, adoring which the worst poverty-stricken, have turned out to be great possessors of wealth, and even the mutes have turned out to be great masters of speech.



On the auspicious festival of Guru Purnima,  
we, the Gayatri Pariwar Parijans,  
prostrate to the holy padukas of  
Param Pujya Gurudev and Vandaniya Mataji  
with reverence and seek their blessings.

॥ Om bhūrbhuvāḥ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyaṃ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt ॥  
(May Almighty illuminate our intellect and inspire us towards the righteous path)

- Rigveda 3/62/10; Samveda 13/4/3, Yajurveda 3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/3



# Akhand Jyoti

*The Light Divine*

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- Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya
- Mata Bhagwati Devi Sharma

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**Amrit Chintan**

## Laughter is the Best Medicine

It is well-known that humor and joy positively affect the mind and body. They immediately relieve a person of painful symptoms of sorrow, fear, pain, etc. When a person laughs, his face appears like the opening of the petals of a blossoming flower; his each and every pore is filled with new vigor, and his mind becomes fresh. A smile on the lips removes mental worry and weakness. Health and happiness have an intimate connection. If you want to get rid of disease and ailments, want insured life, wish to live for 100 years, then there is only one way – laugh wholeheartedly. If you weep, no one will accompany you. So realize the value of humor and start practicing it now. Make your life sweet with humor. Laugh yourself and also make others laugh.

As a food, water and air are essential for a healthy life, so also the elements of humor and joy are necessary. Therefore, smile, giggle, and laugh without any hesitation. When one laughs gustily, the lungs, stomach, and other internal body parts are exercised, and the flow of blood is increased in all the organs of the body. Laughing freely after hard work relaxes the body and mind, and one gets a new zeal to work again. Therefore, make it a habit to laugh heartily. Laughter and only laughter is the medicine of your pains and sorrows.

**- Pujya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma, Acharya**

A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.

**- Irish proverb**

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“ Laughter is indeed cheap medicine. It's a prescription anyone can afford. And best of all, you can fill it right now. - **Steve Goodier** ”

## Let's Learn the Golden Rules of Holistic Health

The Corona (Covid-19) virus pandemic has made us realize that our existence and health are more significant than our narrow comforts and selfish desires. Therefore, we have decided to devote this issue to 'Health and Wellness'. I believe that the knowledgeable readers would be benefitted by the simple yet effective methods of healing the mind and body, described in this issue.

Param Pujya Gurudev, Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya, in his book 'Rejuvenation without Medicines,' writes – 'Nature has innately gifted all living creatures with vibrant health. Every creature is born with natural resources to be able to lead a healthy and happy life. It is only at the level of human species that one observes a vast majority suffering from some or other kind of illness, affliction, or weakness. When all other creatures, despite having nominal intelligence, keep themselves healthy, it is surprising indeed that human beings, claiming themselves to be intelligent, should be suffering from all kinds of diseases?'

Upon seriously contemplating on

this tricky problem of health, it appears that the life of every creature is tied with strong bonds to Nature. This life-creating agency, Nature, has a set of rules to keep the mind-body system healthy. The living species that follow these rules remain healthy, and those who disobey get trapped in the web of diseases.

It has been observed that the willpower of an individual plays a vital role in augmenting the lifespan. Thus, the first golden rule to attain longevity is that one should have firm faith – 'I will live a healthy and youthful life for a hundred years.' We should thoroughly believe in our ability to keep ourselves well with positive and harmonious thoughts. If someone consistently feels that he is going to die early, he will undoubtedly die soon/prematurely. This inner doubt alone would send him to the door of death.

Orison Swett Marden, in his book 'Peace, Power and Plenty,' writes - 'I know people in delicate health who habitually hold in their minds sick and discordant thoughts. They are always thinking and talking about their ailments. They rejoice over their symptoms, watch them, study them, look for them, until they have what they expect – for like produces like; it cannot produce anything else. A reversal of the thought – thinking of health instead of disease, and holding in mind the health picture instead of the disease picture – would cure many an invalid without medicine. Health thought is the greatest panacea in the world.'

The second rule is about eating right. Everybody knows that food is the basic necessity of life. But, very few know the art of eating right, that is, have an idea of what to eat,

When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied. - **Herophilus**

when to eat, and how to eat. Rigveda (2/30/7) says - ‘O men! Only those food articles are fit for consumption that make the body energetic and satisfied, that provide glow and comfort, and that make the organs strong and fit for the performance of yagya. Do not ever stock and consume those herbs/food materials that sap the body’s strength and produce lethargy and intoxication.’


The third rule to lead a healthy life is that every activity of our life should be inclusive of Nature. Artificiality and the craze of new fashions, new modes of transport and communication, etc. have certainly contributed to social progress, but it has also ruined the health of the masses. In ancient times, our revered ancestors living in forests and groves were deprived of present-day miracles of science and technology; even then, they enjoyed the bliss of holistic health all their lives. Ancient history is full of the prowess of mighty people. Archeologists have found five thousand years’ old skeletons of human beings from which they have inferred that the height and weight of a man used to be around 8 feet and 300 kg, respectively. Even in the previous century, there were quite a good number of people who could eat 6-7 kg food at a time, walk 40-50 km daily, and live for 100-150 years. But within one century, all these things have become impossible.

Fashionability, artificiality, and unnatural routine have snatched away people’s health and long life. If this routine is not changed, the day is not far when, in the coming century, people will become dwarfs and short-lived. The human conduct against Nature will gradually destroy his health – the very base of life. Unless this downward sliding is stopped, there will be no stopping of diseases and pains; instead, they will go on increasing day by day.

Present-day human society has indeed been engulfed in such circumstances that it is not possible to follow the natural routine completely, but it is also true that whatever artificiality has crept in the daily routine due to false fashion, bragging, or greed of eating spicy foods, can be reduced considerably. If purity, naturality, and the need are kept in mind, then many items of eating and living, which are designed to impress others, will appear useless. Like a heavy load, it will appear desirable to shed them as early as possible.

Therefore, Aatmiya Parijans - desirous of rejuvenation! Readers - desirous of a healthy and happy life! Give up this artificial and unnatural routine and return to Nature! Let us turn our back on this false splendor! Let us live a simple yet elegant life! Let us bow to Mother Nature, atone for our wrongdoings, and beg for a healthy life! Compassionate Mother Nature will make us drink her milk, and we will be blessed.

With prayer-filled wishes for a happy, healthy and harmonious life,

  
(Pranav Pandya)

Health is the greatest possession. Contentment is the greatest treasure.  
Confidence is the greatest friend. - Lao Tzu

## Follow Natural Lifestyle to Enjoy Long and Youthful Life

Many of us know that the average lifespan of a rabbit is about seven years; that of a goat or a cat is about eleven years. The expected duration of the lives of a pigeon and a horse are about eight years and 50 years, respectively. Snakes and tortoises generally survive for nearly 120 and 150 years. In the present times, the life expectancy of a human being is estimated to be around 80-100 years on average. However, in normal circumstances, human-life traverses through the successive phases of variation in physical energy and health — childhood, youth, and old-age. In contrast, no such distinct stages are found among the wild animals. Barring some exceptions, that too among the pets, hardly any animal (including birds) would be found suffering from any disease or weakness due to old age. Most of them remain energetic and die in a youth-like active, and hearty state. They don't even experience any fatigue or dullness, despite having no means of comfort, or 'supplements for vigor'; they don't even have intellect and other evolved faculties like humans. Then what is the secret of their youthful life? The answer is

quite simple — they live a stress-free life in complete harmony with Nature.

Admiring the youthfulness of the creatures other than humans, Saint Francis used to say that they live in closed contact of Nature, near the heart of God. Naturalist Alan Devoe had spent most of his life in the study of birds and animals. He used to say, 'what I have learned in 80 years of life from the company of these creatures cannot be found in any treatise of vast knowledge. These creatures silently teach us to enjoy every moment of life!' He concludes that the secret of their unflinching energy and joy lies in the fact that they live an absolutely natural life.

Writings<sup>[1]</sup> of this Nature-lover generate a live panorama of the beauty of wildlife when he narrates his friendship with the rabbits, deer, white rodents, foxes, raccoons, skunks; the fearless jumping and 'flying stunts' of the squirrels even late in the evening; etc. At one place, he describes how an elderly deer, who was joyfully grazing soft green grass, was so alert in preventing the attack of a snake who had quietly come close to the former's nose. Like a fearless warrior, the deer quickly caught the snake and forcefully pressed it under his hoof. Interestingly, moments after that, he coolly started enjoying the green grass again, as if nothing had happened! If we, the 'intelligent-beings,' learn from these wild creatures to naturally face every situation sans losing our mental peace and focus, sans any worries and tensions, then even at the age of 80 or so, we can also remain healthy and hearty like that deer.

Every activity, every expression of Nature, is so inspiring!

Water, air, and cleanness are the chief articles in my pharmacy.

- Napoleon Bonaparte

It teaches us to leave aside the tensions; it presents a live illustration of how to be happy and make the best use of every moment of life. Inspired by Nature, birds and animals get up at fixed time, follow the regular routine, collect and eat their natural food, remain active till they go to sleep at their 'standard' time. There is nothing artificial and beyond Nature's disciplines in their lives. This is the secret of their healthy and youthfully dynamic life.

The little sparrows, which are so tiny in size, power, and 'intellect,' also spread so much joy by their melodious music (chirping) and dancing (hopping)! It cheerfully greets the sunrise every day and gets engaged in the search for suitable food without any bit of stress, fear, boredom, or fatigue. It has no tension of whether there will be any food, or how far it will have to go, whether the baby-sparrows will remain protected in the nest, etc. An elephant needs so much food every day! But every day it roves around the jungle and eats the leaves, flowers, fruits wherever available. Unlike humans, it never bothers to hoard anything. That is why it remains healthy and happy. Similar is the case of the horses, dogs, cats, pigeons, etc. Except for those kept as pets, the others never fall sick. It seems as though the glow of the rising sun fills them with enormous energy.

In his memoirs, Devoe has narrated an incident of extraordinary alertness and defensive bravery of the birds: While walking along a river-side, he saw a nest hanging beneath a river-bridge. Out of sheer curiosity, he peeped inside to look at the eggs/baby-birds, if any. In no time he faced the aggressive defense of the 'owners'; the female bird came flying almost instantly, the male also reached around the same time and sat on his head; the jerk of its feathers of was so forceful that Devoe's spectacles fell down; he also lost his balance due to this unexpected attack, and slipped into the river; he was lucky that this happened near the shore

and the water level was low! This left him amazed at how intrepidly these creatures face unprecedented dangers and challenges. On the contrary, weakened by their passions, the humans so often further diminish their vitality by getting frightened and stressed by even the small ups and downs of life?

One afternoon when the naturalist was working on his small farm, a woodpecker flew from somewhere and quietly sat on a rock near him; he found nothing unusual in this; the bird also looked fine. But to his shock, in few seconds, the woodpecker died, and the dead body fell on the rock itself. Surprisingly, there was no sign of injury, pain, fear, or restlessness in the bird before leaving the body! This was another remarkable experience, which demonstrated that the death of a nature-inspired, tension-free, and disciplined creature is so peaceful and natural, like its joyful, active life!

We, the human species, are more gifted in terms of the evolved brain, overall structure and faculties of the body, and enormous potentials of the mind as compared to the other creatures. But, while other creatures live cheerfully with their negligible resources, most of us end-up carrying life as a burden! It's a pity that despite

No disease that can be treated by diet should be treated with any other means.

- Moses Maimonides



having significant gifts of Nature, we do not fully enjoy what we have. Instead, we spoil them in mindless cravings; we embrace the artificial lifestyle and invite infirmities, sufferings, fears, and worries in return. Nevertheless, there are some among us who realize the importance of living in harmony with Nature and thus minimize such risks. Similar is the case with those who adopt a positive attitude and regard the ups and downs of life, aging of the body, etc., as natural phases. As the following examples show, most often, such people not only lived a happy and (youthfully) energetic life but also contributed a lot to make others happy.

### **Benefits of Natural-lifestyle – Some Live Examples:**

Winston Churchill considered old age as the best phase of life. He used to say, 'Youth is like a blooming flower, and old age is like a ripe fruit — one is a treasure of colors, the other is a reservoir of tasty juice. Both have their beauty and joy.' Indeed, because of this outlook, at 80+, he was dynamic as a young man and cheerful like a child. He used to advise in the official matters of England till his last days. Mahatma Gandhi had strictly followed a natural lifestyle. His work-capacity and alacrity, even in the 8<sup>th</sup> decade of his life, were like a dynamic youth. George Bernard

Shaw was so vibrant in his old age that one would confuse him with a young man. He used to attribute this to his positive attitude and natural lifestyle.

A Japanese saint used to regard wrinkles of old-age as a divine boon. Indeed, one can preserve the beauty of the face by retaining the natural smile on it. According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a renowned scholar and former president of India, the key to the longevity of youthfulness lies in cheerful Nature, balanced and healthy diet, and disciplined routine in coherence with Nature.

### **Beat Out Aging:**

Dr. M. Keith's book "Royal Road to Hell" points out unnatural routine (artificial lifestyle) as the root cause of generally weakening health, which often invites varieties of diseases/disorders and untimely aging. The author advises humankind to follow the birds and animals that enjoy youthful vigor and happiness for entire life because of their intimacy with Nature. They don't have a proper habitat or 'house' to protect them, no storage of food for the next day; still, nothing can diminish their joy and energy. Then why most people face the risk of all sorts of health hazards and sufferings of old-age despite having many comforts and means of protection? Investigations show that it happens mainly because of unnecessary worries (negative thinking), uncontrolled passions, bad habits, and undisciplined lifestyle. As the lives of the several great personalities cited above illustrate, one can beat aging and infirmity by adopting a healthy and active lifestyle and positive and joyous attitude in all circumstances.

### **Ancient Teachings Show us the Path:**

The human being is referred to in our ancient texts as the crown prince of God. The supreme creator has bestowed the precious human life upon us with the responsibilities

What drains your spirit drains your body. What fuels your spirit fuels your body

- Carolyn Myss

to protect, beautify, and dignify His entire creation. It is indeed a great fortune to be born in a human body. The Vedic texts preach us “*Śarīramādyam Khaludharma Sādhanam*” — the human body is the only tool to fulfill all religious and other righteous duties.

*Varca Prā Dhehi Me Tanvāmasah Ojo Vayam Lalam|  
Indriyāya Twā Karmaṇe Vīryāya Pratigrahaṇābhi Śatam  
Śāradāya||* (Atharv. 19|37|2)

Meaning: May my body has strength, dynamism, and radiance. For hundreds of years, I should continue to work, making the best use of all my sensory and cognitive faculties.

Indeed, a healthy and active body with youthful enthusiasm is essential to exert every endeavor, be that worldly or spiritual. We should regard the body as a temple of the soul and take care of its hygiene, health, strength, and dignity like a religious duty.

### **Natural Balance of the Five Basic Elements:**

We all know that our body is made up of the five basic elements — the earth, water, fire, air, and ether. The holistic science of health guided in the Vedic texts elucidates the universal fact that the body (of a living being) is healthy if there is natural equilibrium (mutually harmonious balance) of the five basic elements in it. Any disturbance in this natural equilibrium (of the levels and active states) of these foundational elements results in disorder in the body-functions — e.g., physiological and biochemical functions (including neural and immune functions); it also perturbs the naturally healthy state at molecular, cellular, and organ levels. Consequently, the body becomes vulnerable to weakness and illness. Even if there is no external cause (e.g., bacterial infection), a minute disorder

in the body’s system can also disturb its healthy state.

As the five basic elements are natural, so their natural equilibrium can also be maintained or regained only by Nature. Living in the proximity of Nature and in harmony with it is the most effective, viable, and risk-free mode of sustenance of health; it is also the best remedy against illness and infirmities. (The methods of Naturopathy and Natural Detoxification are derived from this basic principle.)

It’s a pity that most people today spoil their health by neglecting/disobeying the disciplines of a natural lifestyle. They enhance the risk of health-hazards much more by opting for synthesized chemical-based medicines, antibiotics, and unnatural (supported by artificial tools) modes of treatment. These medicines and methods of treatment often provide quick relief but disturb the natural balance of the five basic elements and thus spoil some vital functions (e.g., metabolism, ionic flows, immune response, etc.). With rising cases, types, and risks of diseases/disorders and other health-hazards, of late, the modern medical sciences have also realized the need for natural methods of healing. This is why ethnomedicine

Food and medicine are not two different things: they are the front and back of one body. Chemically grown vegetables may be eaten for food, but they cannot be used as medicine. - **Masanobu Fukuoka**

(e.g., herbal), naturopathy, yoga, and other nature-friendly alternative therapies/health-supports are being recognized in a big way, and research on alternative and complementary medicines have gained significant momentum.

Nature is the loving mother to all; all living beings are its children. It affectionately protects and nurtures everyone. Then why do we run away from her? We should also realize our duties towards her. We should also remember that everyone who is born is bound to die one day. Wise are those who enjoy every moment of their limited lifespan with the full support of Mother Nature. Adoption of natural lifestyle with positivity will boost eco-friendly, nature-protecting model of development, and serve the dual purpose of sustainable progress and long youthful health.



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## 'Health' and 'Wellness'

Health and wellness are terms that are often interchanged, but their origins and meanings are different. As established by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the 1940s, health is referred to as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Although this definition has been criticized for being overly inclusive and unattainable, especially as it relates to the word "complete," very importantly, it broadens the medical definition of health beyond the simple absence of disease. According to the WHO, the primary determinants of health include the social, economic, and physical environments, and the person's characteristics and behaviors. The maintenance and improvement of health, accordingly, depends not only on external or environmental factors (including the systems of care), but also on the efforts and intelligent lifestyle choices of the person. In fact, it depends on wellness..... Health refers to physical, mental, and social well-being; wellness aims to enhance well-being.

[Debbie L. Stoewen: Can. Vet. J. Vol. 56(9), pp. 983–984 (2015)]



Keep your vitality. A life without health is like a river without water.

- Maxime Lagacé

## How to get Sound Sleep?

**H**ave you ever thought about sleep, in whose deep ocean we sink all our sorrows, worries and difficulties for some time, and then waking up refreshed and rejuvenated, begin to tread on the walk of life with renewed energy? What a fantastic gift of nature to man sleep is! Shakespeare has described sleep as - "Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care, the death of each day's life, sore labor's bath, balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast ...'(Macbeth). Even after death, we continue to evolve and get a new life in the form of a happy, playful child. Similarly, every morning after sleep, we get a new consciousness and a new experience and start our activities again. What a beautiful play this is! How great this grace of goddess of sleep upon humans is! We go to her lap tired, lost and weary of all problems of the world, and return with new life, new energy, enthusiasm, and happiness. It has been bestowed upon us as a birthright to receive a new life daily, and surely, no other gift of the world can match up to this. If a person has to stay awake for a few nights together, he may die or go mad. So important sleep is for our life!

Sleep is a gift of nature; we neither have to pay for it nor bear any pain to receive it. Yet many people are not able to benefit from it fully. They always complain of sleeplessness. They even go on medication for sleep but still do not receive the benefits that can be earned naturally. (It is advisable that pills for sleep should never be taken without prescription. These may have an adverse impact on the body and may further increase the problem of insomnia.)

Our scriptures describe the following fundamental

characteristics to earn a good sleep - "One who is virtuous, untouched by sensual desires, and is contented would always fall asleep at the right time." Indeed, only a virtuous person who has control over senses can enjoy all the benefits of sleep. He always gets sleep in time, just as the sun sets in time daily. Why do we not get sleep, and why is the whole society afflicted with sleeplessness today? This is because our conduct is degenerating day by day, and we have got addicted to sensual gratification. If a fire of unfulfilled desires rages within, how can we receive a healthy, good night's sleep? There is no doubt that for healthy sleep, our body and mind need to be balanced and healthy, and our daily routine has to be well organized. Whoever abandons a simple lifestyle and adopts a complicated and unnatural lifestyle has to suffer from sleeplessness naturally.

Many people are very reflective by nature. Day and night, their minds keep fussing about something or the other. They keep rolling in their bed, and as they close their eyes in the night, finding quietude, their

Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

- Benjamin Franklin

mind begins to wander in thoughts more forcefully, and they cannot fall asleep. On the other hand, a tired worker after a day's hard work falls asleep immediately, even on hard ground. This is because his mind does not fuss about and wander in thoughts. This does not mean contemplation is terrible, or that we must not think. No, it is essential to be reflective because all the new ideas and new concepts get created by thinking. But there has to be a limit to thinking. At least, when it is time to lie down on the bed to sleep, we must leave the topics and a load of reflection outside. Thought processes may be in the right direction or wrong, but they must not take hold of us. To be able to start thinking when we want and stop when we don't is a practice that must be learned to prevent thoughts from interfering with our sleep. Mahatma Gandhi was a great thinker, but when he wanted to rest, he would fall asleep quickly; such was his control over his mind.

Uncontrolled thinking and reflection on the past strongly activate brain cells, and it is a nature of our mind to keep fussing and to reflect over a topic that catches its attention. It forces us to get immersed in intermingled thoughts.

In such a state, even if we doze off, the nerve cells remain so excited that they continue their work through dreams. As a result, sleep remains incomplete. Whenever a night is spent dreaming continuously, the body feels tired and drowsy the next day.

So, before sleeping, we need to get rid of all the thoughts and worries. With a healthy and empty mind, we must lie down in a comfortable position and bring the brain to a state that is devoid of all thoughts. Then with each wave of sleep, we should slowly disappear in the void where we, our world, and all its affairs completely lose their existence.

Another reason for sleeplessness is not doing enough physical labor. In the modern world created by science, it is a great misfortune that we look down upon physical labor, consider it below dignity and try to avoid doing it. But in the absence of hard physical work, blood circulation in the body gets affected; harmful chemicals and dirt begin to accumulate. These also stimulate the heart, nerve cells, and brain, which then cause interference in sleep. If we look around us, we will find that people who usually do not do much physical work often suffer from insomnia. If we want good sleep, we must do physical work. Go out for some action, play some games, and do whatever suits and interests you.

For a timely and sound sleep, our lifestyle has to be regular and well organized. Wake up in time, do all work in time, eat in time, go for a walk, and go to bed at the same time each day. This helps in getting timely and sound sleep. People who do not have regularity in sleeping, waking up, eating, drinking, and daily activities, who live chaotic lives, who watch movies till late night, have parties, play cards, etc. usually get deprived of

The scientific truth may be put quite briefly; eat moderately, having an ordinary mixed diet, and don't worry. - **Robert Hutchison**

healthy sleep. For getting complete rest in the night, it is essential to live a regular and organized lifestyle.

Impure thoughts and wrongful activities are also regarded as enemies of sleep. As stated before, a virtuous, contented being can never be deprived of healthy sleep. Impure thoughts and dirty literature, obscene pictures, talks, and behavior should be avoided. Self-control and good character is an essential need. In present times, fall of character, corrupt lifestyle, crooked thinking, obscene fantasies, and prevalence of negative emotions like malice, anger, distrust, suspiciousness, fear, etc. are the leading causes of the disease of insomnia.

For a healthy sleep, consumption of all kinds of intoxicating and stimulating substances should be avoided. Tea, cigarettes, liquor, etc. cause insomnia. The more these are avoided, the better the quality of sleep would be. These should not be consumed before going to sleep.

It is an absolute truth that a healthy sleep comes to a healthy body. If the body is afflicted with some disease or disorder, the person can't sleep well. The worse the condition, the higher the problem of insomnia. So the body must be kept healthy.

The food we eat also intensely affects our sleep. When heavy and difficult to digest food is taken before sleep, the digestive system is put to hard work. In this state, sleep comes late, with difficulty, and remains disturbed. As a result, the purpose of sleep to get a good rest remains unfulfilled. So, the food has to be light and nutritious and should be taken at least three hours before going to bed. Urges to use the restroom must be met before going to bed.

The place and the environment also have a significant effect on sleep. The bedroom should be free from noise and disturbance as far as possible. Fresh air should be provisioned for, and the room should be rid of insects like mosquitoes, bed bugs, etc.

How much should one sleep and when should be decided by weighing the need of the body and the circumstances. What is most important is to rid the mind of all negativity, to make it quiet, and to bring it to a satisfying state before entering the bedroom. For this, it is good to practice reading good literature, scriptures, remembering God, and taking auspicious resolves to immerse oneself into the lap of sleep.

•••

“The reason lifestyle is such an important issue is 75 percent of all our chronic diseases are due to lifestyle issues. If you're really not addressing lifestyle, you're not going to move the needle in terms of health.”

– Dexter Shurney

The greatest of follies is to sacrifice health for any other kind of happiness.

- Arthur Schopenhauer

## The Art of Eating Right

The effect of food on the body is comprehensive. Be it physical health or mental well-being, both are intrinsically linked with food and keeps taking up and down swings depending on changes in it. It is a matter of everyday experience. Bad and irregular dietary habits make the body sick and the mind restless.

If we were to enumerate the ill-effects of rich, pungent, spicy, and fried food, we would have to list practically all the diseases, because all of them have a direct or indirect connection with food. The fashionable fast foods, packed food, or junk food of today also fall in the same category. This new style of eating, widely prevalent these days, has given many a body-blow to the quality of human life.

Food is a basic necessity of life. Everybody knows this, but very few know the art of eating right, that is, have an idea of what to eat, when to eat, and how to eat. Let's first take the "what to eat?" aspect. The only proper and right answer to this question is that we should eat only what provides nourishment to the

body. It is important to remember that we eat to live and do not live to eat. So, if the right kind of food is to be selected out of a long list of eatables, we will have to give preference to only those items that have nutritional value and are beneficial for health. Such articles can very easily be identified. Everybody is aware, for example, of the importance of fresh fruits, vegetables, pulses, cereals, etc.

Many cooking ingredients like pungent spices, appetizers, pickles, etc. lack any nutritive value and are manifestly harmful to health, and so are the processes of frying, stewing, etc. These render even healthy food useless and unhealthy. Materials inimical to health are found not only in the kitchen but also outside; e. g. liquor and intoxicants of various kinds, betel, tobacco, zarda, gutka, and so many other such things have acquired the status of food supplements and are used routinely. The situation has become so alarming that even the food habits of the elites make one wonder why these educated and well-informed persons have lost their sense of wise discrimination. There are some exceptions, of course, in this class, but their number is negligible.

"When to eat"? Again, the answer is only one, viz. twice a day at the most, and that too, when the appetite has built up sufficiently. Eating randomly, or taking frequent snacks and breakfast, in addition to regular meals, is going to do no good. Dietary habits, these days, have so much deteriorated that biologists and psychologists have made this matter a subject of their research. They classify hunger in different types, for

Science and mindfulness complement each other in helping people to eat well and maintain their health and well-being. - **Thich Nhat Hanh**

example, (i) intense craving to eat at the sight of others' eating (ii) frequent urge to snack during moments of tension (iii) fixed-time-appetite following the biological clock, etc. The experts consider the former two types wrong and only the third type right.

Now having known that one should eat only when there is a real appetite for it, there follows the next question "how to eat"? The answer is that food should be taken in a quiet and restful manner, with humble remembrance of God as His Prasada (grace). If food is seen as God's Prasada, even the simple 'chapati' (unleavened bread) proves nourishing. On the contrary, sweetmeats, multi-course dishes, and dry fruits, if taken hurriedly and in fretful mood, impair health and produce ailments. The right food appropriately taken is the key to sound health. The Ayurveda (ancient healing therapy) has an exciting and instructive story. Once it occurred to Maharishi Charaka, the great pioneer of Ayurveda that he should test whether his pupils understood his teachings correctly. He metamorphosed into a pigeon and sat on a tree, under which many vaidyas (healers) were passing by. The pigeon called out: "Ko ruk, ko ruk, ko ruk"? (Who is healthy, who is healthy, who is healthy?). The vaidyas paid no heed to pigeon's words. The Maharishi thought that either they did not comprehend what the tiny bird was saying, or they were ignoring him. He flew from there and chose another tree. Incidentally, the great scholar Vagabhatta was passing that way. He heard the query of Maharishi and repeatedly replied thrice: "Hitbhuk, hitbhuk, hitbhuk," i.e., healthy is one who eats the right type of food. Charaka-turned-pigeon asked again, "Ko ruk, Ko ruk, Ko ruk"? Vagadatta answered: "Mitbhuk, mitbhuk, mitbhuk," i.e., the one who eats in moderation. The 'bird' repeated the question a third time. Vagabhatta's response this time was:

"Ritbhuk, ritbhuk, ritbhuk," i.e., one who eats according to season; and what he has earned through fair means. The bird flew away satisfied, as his questions had been answered correctly.

Three words or stipulations may be laid down about diet - hit, mit, and rit. Hitbhoji is one who consumes only those materials that are useful and beneficial for health. Such a person eats for fitness, not taste. Mitbhoji is one who eats in moderation. Gluttons cannot do any sadhana. They remain preoccupied with finding digestive powders and tablets after meals.

The word rit here means the inner attitude with which the food is prepared and taken. What are the feelings of the person cooking the food? Rit food can be made only by one who is full of loving-kindness, who is suffused with motherly affection. And then the way of earning our livelihood must also be righteous and honest. The nature of our consciousness is refined or perverted depending upon the quality of the food we consume. This very refinement or perversion is reflected in our style of living too.

●●●

The body loves routine. Try to eat, sleep, and so on at the same time every day for the body to function at its optimum efficiency. The body loves consistency. - **Theresa Hearn Haynes**



## Significance of

### *Śabda Yoga and Mantra Yoga*

**Y**oga is globally recognized these days as a practical science of health-management. But as the knowledgeable people would agree, this Vedic science is not confined only to some physical postures and breathing exercises. It pertains to the deep science of spirituality. The word-meaning of “yoga” is — “union,” “combination,” “active linkage.” In spiritual parlance, it implies — active linkage of the inner self with higher realms of Consciousness-Force. The practices of specific methods of *yoga* can offer holistic well-being at the level of physical, mental, emotional, as well as spiritual levels. The principal techniques of *yoga* may be grouped into three major classes — *prāṇa yoga*, *dhyāna yoga*, and *mantra yoga*. As a spiritual endeavor (*sādhanā*), the *mantra yoga*, which harnesses the power of *Śabda*<sup>1</sup>, also, to some extent, incorporates *prāṇa yoga* and *dhyāna yoga*.

#### **Immense Power of *Śabda*:**

The *Vedas* state — “The transcendent resolve of the *Brahm*<sup>2</sup> (the Omnipresent, Eternal Consciousness-Force) to express *thysself* in the infinity was manifested through the

evolutionary vibration of *Śabda*. Whence Nature came into existence...”. According to the Vedic scriptures, Lord Brahma (the Supreme Creator) then exerted arduous *tapa* and did epochal *sādhanā* of the Gayatri Mantra that resulted in the manifestation of Nature with its animate and inanimate components and creation of the universe. The other religious scriptures like the holy *Qurāna* mentions — ‘*Khudā* (the Supreme Holy Power, God) said... “Be...” and All that happened...’; and “The Angel” states — ‘The absolute word (sound) was there when nothing was there... All have originated from *thy word*...’.

The above-stated maxims (English versions of the original scriptural texts) imply the eternal power of *Śabda* as the origin of everything — the perceivable as well as the extra-sensory forms of animate and inanimate elements and powers of Nature.

Every thought, or internal or external desire, expresses itself (to one’s own self or others) via the medium of words; these words, as speech (voice or vocal sound) or thoughts (mental sound), are also manifestations of *Śabda*. If the ‘desire’ or idea has emerged, as an urge of conscience, from the deeper depths of the inner self, then its expression will be embedded with a force of the *Śabda Brahm*<sup>3</sup>. Such an ‘inner wish’ will not remain unfulfilled, provided no other disturbance in mind crops up around the same time. Most often, one’s extrovert attitude, mental agility, materialistic cravings and attachments, passions, haphazard or negative thoughts, and lack of confidence in own self subtly disturb one’s mind and block the inner voice. One’s evil instincts and assimilated untoward

“ Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence, so that’s very important for good health. - Dalai Lama ”

tendencies accelerate such dissipative effects and even counter the emergence of an inner urge. The purer one's (conscious and unconscious) mind, greater would be the linkage of his/her inner voice with the *Śabda Brahm*.

We must realize that our consciousness has originated from the divine consciousness. That divinity indwells in our inner self, and therefore our words can also be so powerful that they could 'communicate' with Nature and with the eternal Creator. But we remain deprived of it, as the voice of our divine inner self remains unheard and eventually becomes silent for us because we keep-on blocking it with the many shields of our egotism, avarice, ignorance, selfish attachments, sensory greed, worldly passions, etc., so much so that we don't even believe that there is anything like the divine voice of the conscience or extraordinary power of inner voice. But, recall that there have been great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, who had awakened this power by practicing absolute truth in his feelings, thoughts, speech, and deeds. Higher levels of such endeavors of devout *sādhakas* awaken the supernormal potentials of *Śabda* in their (spiritually refined) voice, blessing a boon, creating or transforming any kind of matter, etc., by mere chanting of some *mantras* are simple manifestations of this unlimited power.

### **Power of Sound:**

Loud (high-beat) sounds on the peaks of the high snow-covered mountains can make the surrounding snow melt and might even result in a landslide! Similarly, the power (of *Śabda*) indwelling in the sound (of the words) of a prayer — emerging from the deep sentiments of a saintly heart can even penetrate the 'high skies' of sublime consciousness. (Do we really know about or pay attention to the presence of this immense power in ourselves?)

Power of the words 'uttered' by our subconscious mind manifests itself in the infinite varieties of creations in the world of our dreams and imaginations. The psychological effects of the latter are enormous. There is also a close relationship in the 'sounds'(words) of our conscious and the subconscious minds. For instance, whenever we talk about or hear of a natural calamity or an epidemic, our mind simultaneously starts thinking about it via the language of imaginations and vice-versa. The practices of auto-suggestion, self-hypnotism, are based on a focused and creative utilization of this relationship; these are found very effective in psychological healing and positive uplifting of the mind.

There is a saying in Sanskrit — '*Yathā Manasā Manute Tathā Vācā Vadati*'; meaning— as we think so we speak. Our mind (conscious as well as subconscious) never remains silent. It keeps talking to itself even when we are silent. These thoughts continue to leave their subtle impressions upon our overall personality. Sometimes the thoughts will also leave an immediate impact on our face-expressions. Often, the state of mind (or mood) can be 'read' through such face-expressions. For example, it shows wrinkles on the

The devil has put a penalty on all things we enjoy in life. Either we suffer in health, or we suffer in the soul, or we get fat. - **Albert Einstein**

forehead in the state of tension; a blushing face becomes pink; face turns yellow in the state of real fear, etc. Some spiritual saints and *yogis* can know one's overall character just by reading the subtle expression of his thoughts (and the internal desire at the root of these thoughts) on his face.

Realizing the psychological importance of *Śabda*, we must, at least, begin to speak, hear, and think in a manner that will have positive effects on our mind. Cautious use of words and thoughts may be regarded as the first step towards the practice of *Śabda Yoga*. Further, we must develop the confidence that, by cultivating sacred thoughts and emotions and by the sincere practice of being truthful, we can strengthen our voice (vocal, mental, as well as the inner voice) so much so that it becomes an adept source of grooming our own destiny.

#### **Mantra Yoga:**

A human being is an ensemble of the *sthūla śarīra* (physical body), *sukśma śarīra* (subtle body, or mental or energy body) and the *kāraṇa śarīra* (causal body — the core of inner-self; the domain of soul-presence in a life-form). Perennial expression of the supreme divine powers of the trinity Gods — Brahma, Vishnu,

and Shiva, is vital for the manifestation and continuity of Nature and life. Similarly, the existence of the three bodies is an integral part of the existence and manifestation of every being in this world. The three bodies, like *triveṇī* — the confluence of the holy rivers *Ganga*, *Yamuna*, and *Saraswati*, are separate as well as one — being the inter-linked layers of a single individual self.

The refinement and development of any one of these bodies would be incomplete without the other two. Therefore, when we talk about the role of *Śabda* or *Mantra Vijñāna* (deep science of Mantra) in human-life, we must analyze the respective effects on each of the three 'layers' (bodies) of a human being.

There are three basic energies in the world— Sound, Light, and Heat. According to the electromagnetic wave theory, the ever-expanding universe is described as a limitless ocean of energy waves. Grasping and utilization of some of these has given rise to the discoveries/inventions like radio, telephone, television, X-rays, radio-waves, laser, gamma-rays, etc. Cosmic combinations of superimposition of compatible waves are supposed to give rise to the energy particles, various subtle particles, sub-atomic particles, and eventually to the atomic and molecular forms of matter. The root cause of the existence of different physical forms/states of any kind of material, howsoever tiny or gigantic it might be, is the 'collision or superimposition' of some of these ever-vibrating, energy waves.

The eternal forms of 'sound' and 'vibrations' are synonymous with respect to their physical existence. Noting this, a natural conclusion of the above theory would be that — *Śabda* and *Nāda* are the origins and the ultimate controllers of everything that exists (in a perceivable or subtle form) or happens (including the manifestation of

What is called genius is the abundance of life and health.

- Henry David Thoreau

life and death) in this universe. Our physical, subtle, and causal bodies are thus naturally affected by ‘sound.’

### **Effects on the Physical Body:**

Our physical body is a physically existing system consisting of bio-physicochemical components. The impact of sound on this system results in corresponding vibrations in the organs (e.g., the ears, liver, uterus, etc.), or cellular and molecular components (e.g., intracellular fluid, cell-membrane, an enzyme, or a hormone, etc.), and generates isolated or cascading effects on the interconnected subsystems. These effects could be positive or negative, depending on the type of sound. Several examples of the negative physical effects of the impact of excessive sound are noise-pollution, a rise in blood pressure, and some disturbance in neuronal activities due to loud, fast-beat music, etc. Examples of the positive effects on the physical body include, apart from those described earlier, increase in the immunity through specific therapies based on soothing sound; acceleration of the growth rate of vegetation by special music, increase in the reproduction rates of some varieties of fishes and hens under specific music-based treatments, etc.

### **Effects on the Subtle Body:**

Most common and challenging hindrances in the successful practice of any *sādhana* or spiritual experiment of *yoga* can be classified into three parent groups *viz.*, *lobha* (greed), *moha* (selfish attitude and possessive attachments) and *ahaṅkāra* (egotism). Refinement and sublime activation of the subtle body are necessary to overcome these. The essential virtues that help the individual self struggle against these internal enemies also fall under three major categories — *sāhasa* (courage), *saṅkalpa* (firm determination), and *saṁvedana* (compassion, emotional sensitivity).

Like any other *sādhana*, the success of *mantra yoga* also depends upon the adoption of these virtues. Notably, there are some *mantras* revered as divine utterances, chants of which, with deep faith, helps enhance these essential virtues. Notable examples of these include — eternal, self-existent “*Om*,” the Gayatri (*Gāyatrī*) *Mantra*, and the divine words/messages like *Kalmā-Śarīfa*, *Bapatismā*, *nāmoṅkāra*, and the syllable *Huṁ* of the *Maṇipāda*, etc., revered in different religions.

### **Deep Science of Mantra Yoga:**

Out of the three most familiar manifestations of *Śabda* in energy forms, sound directly affects the physical body, heat influences the energy body, and light (the sublime light of consciousness-force) inspires the mental body (the inner self). The latter two types of effects often remain unrecognized because of the frequent random fluctuations in our conscious and unconscious mind. Irregularities in our physical activities and stochastic variations in our interactions with these energies make it impossible to identify these sublime effects. Even if the supernatural effects (of *Śabda*) are experienced some time, these are often attributed as ‘coincidences’ owing to the lack of

With age comes the understanding and appreciation of your most important asset, your health. - Oprah Winfrey

sufficient knowledge or scientific data to analyze the causes.

Proper synchronization of a consistent state of our body and mind with any one of the above powers of *Śabda* for a given span of time and at a selected space, free from other (random) disturbances is necessary to conduct scientific experiments to study some such effects, even at a physical level. The philosophy, discipline, and practices of *prāṇa yoga*, *mantra yoga*, and *dhyāna yoga* should be studied deeply under adept guidance and gradually applied for conducting feasible experiments of the above *yogas* on the physical body, energy body, and mind.

The methods of *Mantra Vijñāna* can be used to refine, by specific sonic effects, the state and functioning of the physical body or any kind of matter. The mode of utilization and outcomes of these methods depend upon three major factors — (i) the structure of *Mantra* in terms of the configuration of syllables and vowels, i.e., the sonic pattern of the *Mantra*; (ii) overall character and personality of the *sādhaka*, and (iii) faith of the *sādhaka* in the *Mantra* by which the power of *Mantra* amplifies and penetrates the innermost energy centers of the *sādhaka*.

The *rishis* (Vedic sages) were spiritual *yogis* and scientists of *Śabda*. The *Vedic mantras* (as transcendent sounds or vibrations of *Śabda* in the etheric ocean) were realized by them through their spiritual acumen or intuition in the state of deep trance. This is the reason why most of these *mantras* are known as – *Śruti* (‘heard’) or as – ‘conveyed in the celestial voice.’ Therefore, the coding of the sonic patterns in these *mantras* is perfect with respect to the impact of *Śabda*. Sincere practice of mantra yoga by *japa*<sup>4</sup> *sāadhanā* of a Vedic Mantra, therefore, bestows miraculous effects.



#### Notes:

1. *Śabda*: Eternal, cosmic element of sound (generated by the evolutionary impulse of *Brahm*); the absolute self-existent source of all — (i) expressed, including audible and inaudible sounds; and the spoken, written or mentally generated words, and (ii) unexpressed, sublime sounds/sonic vibrations in the etheric expanse. *Nāda*: Rhythmic flow (music) of the perpetual current of *Śabda* in Nature.
2. *Brahm*: the Omnipresent, Eternal Consciousness-Force.
3. *Śabda Brahm*: The Omnipresent expression of *Brahm*, which is also the source of all existence.
4. *Japa*: Repeated rhythmic recitation (preferably, mental chanting) with deep meditation and emotional engrossment.

“ If you achieve all kinds of things in the material world, but you lose your health or your peace of mind, you get little or no pleasure from your other accomplishments. - Brian Tracy ”

## The Miraculous Healing Power of *Tulasi*

Since the rise of civilization in this world, humankind has known two words – disease and medicine. When one suffers from some disease, the physician prescribes some medications – tablet, capsule, syrup, injection, etc. But unlike the present-day drugs, in earlier times, some herbs used to be given to the patients, and they would get well soon. *Tulasi* (Holy Basil, *Ocimum Sanctum*), too, was one such herb. With continuous use of this herb, when the seers/sages observed that it could cure many ailments and also helped in keeping the ambient atmosphere pure, they started propagating the virtues of this herb. They even called it dharma to plant its saplings in one's home and take good care of them. Gradually its popularity as a healing herb was increased so much that people began considering it as a divine plant and started worshipping it. Even the present-day herbal specialists and ayurvedic practitioners sing the paeans of praise of this herb. Let us have a look at the healing properties of *Tulasi*.

An ancient and most authentic scripture on Ayurveda, 'Charaka Samhita,' describes the medicinal properties of *Tulasi* as follows: '*Tulasi* helps in hiccups, cough, poisoning, and rib pain. It balances three *doshas* (*Tridoshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha*) in the body; it also removes bad odor of mouth.'

Another renowned Ayurvedic text, 'Bhava Prakash,' mentions *Tulasi* to be useful in treating the heart and skin diseases, improving digestion, alleviating the pain of dysuria, and balancing *Vata* and *Kapha*. The ancient practitioners of Ayurveda wrote 'Nighantu'

– texts describing the properties of various herbs, including *Tulasi*. It has been written in 'Dhanvantari Nighantu' that *Tulasi* is lightly hot, dry, and digestive. It removes the worms in the intestines. 'Rajaballabha Nighantu' describes that *Tulasi* is beneficial in removing the foul smell of the mouth, cough, cold, and hiccups. Kaiyadev Nighantu claims it to be effective in curing leprosy and the diseases of the eyes.

There two types of *Tulasi* – *Rama* and *Shyama*. *Rama* variety has light green leaves, and *Shyama* variety has violet –green leaves. *Shyama Tulasi* is considered suitable for therapeutic use. Acharya Shriram Sharma has given several home remedies using *Tulasi* in his book titled '*Tulasi ke chamatkari guna*' (Miraculous properties of *Tulasi*). A few of them are mentioned as follows:

1. **Cold and cough:** (i) To cure fever due to cold and cough, one should take half teaspoonful each of the extract of *Tulasi* leaves and the extract of ginger with one teaspoonful of

Want to be healthy? Cook. The food industry has done a great job of convincing eaters that corporations can cook better than we can. The problem is, it's not true. – **Michael Pollan**

honey three to four times a day. (ii) Relief from cough can be obtained by taking the decoction that is made as follows: Take 5 gm of *Tulasi* leaves, 10 gm of wheat bran, and 5 gm of *Mulahathi* (licorice root) powder and boil the mixture in 250 ml of water. When half of the water is burnt, cool it and filter it. Add a small amount of *desi khand* (sugar) in it. Taking this decoction thrice a day gives relief from cough. (iii) A decoction prepared from the mixture of *Tulasi* leaves, turmeric powder, and black pepper, taken thrice a day, benefits a patient suffering from cold and fever.

2. **All types of fevers:** Take eleven green leaves of *Tulasi*, nine seeds of black pepper, two gm of *ajwain* (carom seeds), and three gms of dry ginger powder; grind them properly and dissolve the mixture in 50 ml of water. Now take one *Shikora/Kulhad* (earthenware cup) and heat it. Once it is heated to a higher temperature, remove it from the heater (e.g., gas or fire) and pour the liquid mixture into it. Let it cool till it is lukewarm. Add a pinch of rock

salt in it and drink it. This mixture should be taken once a day. This decoction can cure all types of fevers.

3. **Malaria:** (i) Take 50 gm of green leaves of *Tulasi* and 25 gm of black pepper and grind them together. Make small pellets of the size of *jharberi* (buckthorn fruit) and dry them in shadow. Taking two pellets with warm water thrice a day cures malaria. *Alternatively* (ii) Grind well the mixture of *Tulasi* leaves - 10 gm, black pepper - 10 gm, leaves of bitter gourd - 10 gm, and *kutaki* (*Picrohiza Kurroa*) - 40 gm, and make pellets of the size of peas from this ground matter. Dry them in the shadow. Consuming two pellets with water twice a day cures the patient of malaria. In the season of this disease, if a healthy person takes one dose of one pellet daily, he will not suffer from the disease.
4. ***Tulasi* for Libido:** (i) Add 10 gm of old jaggery (*Gur*) to 3 gm of powder of seeds or root of *Tulasi* and take it with milk daily. It augments stamina as well as the vigor of men. (ii) Take 50 gm *Tulasi* seeds, 40 gm *safed musali* (*C. Borivilianum*), and 60 gm *mishri* (rock sugar). Powder them and mix them well. Taking 3 gm of this mixture with cow's milk daily removes the sexual weakness of men.
5. **Diarrhea:** Drinking a decoction of *Tulasi Panchang* (a mixture of equal parts of *Tulasi* leaves, seeds, root, *manjari* (dry flowers) and stem) helps in diarrhea and improves digestion. In severe diarrhea, one should add about 200 mg of *Jaiphal* (nutmeg) powder to this decoction. The disease is cured rapidly.

6. **As a brain tonic:** Take 8-10 green leaves of *Tulasi*, 4-5 black pepper, and 2-4 almonds (soaked overnight in water), and grind them well. Dissolve this in a glass of milk and add 2-3 teaspoonful of honey. This makes a delicious drink. Consuming it daily in the morning improves brainpower.

*Alternatively*, one can prepare a drink of *Tulasi* leaves and *Brahmi* powder in milk and take it daily for improving brain function.

7. **Arthritis:** Make a fine powder of *Tulasi Panchang* (a mixture of equal parts of *Tulasi* leaves, seeds, root, *manjari*, and stem). Take 5 gm of this mixture and the same amount of old jaggery with the milk of goat twice daily. This helps in curing arthritis in the initial stages.

Thus, we see that all the parts of the *Tulasi* plant (leaves, seeds, flowers, stem, and root) possess miraculous healing powers. A lot of research is being done on this perennial herb, and the results are also encouraging. Let us plant a few saplings in our homes and take the benefits of its medicinal properties.



### Viruses and bacteria don't stand a chance with a strong immune system

The immune system needs many different types of fuel. Fruits and vegetables provide them. Your diet should be healthy and colorful: Oranges, red peppers, green leafy vegetables, and red cabbage contain a potpourri of vitamins and are especially rich in natural vitamin C.

Sufficient sleep doesn't just allow your body to recuperate. During the slow-wave sleep phase, neurotransmitters are released, and the immune system springs into action.

Studies show that good spirits and a zest for life promote a strong immune system. Laughing and playing don't just provide for a better quality of life; they also boost the body's defenses.

Negative stress activates the release of adrenalin and cortisol. These hormones can paralyze the immune system. Sensible stress and time management allow the body to rest and replenish new energy. Selective relaxation exercises like meditation, autogenic training, and yoga can significantly boost the immune system.

Taking walks in the fresh air gives you a change of temperature and exercise - both stimulate the body's defense systems. Mucous membranes also benefit from improved circulation, and the increased humidity makes it easier to fight off attacks.

[Ref: [www.dw.com/en/top-stories/science](http://www.dw.com/en/top-stories/science)]



After dinner rest a while; after supper walk a mile. - T. Cogan





## A Healthy Mind Keeps the Body Healthy

Every part of the body has its significance, but the mind is most important. It has mysterious powers. The scripture says – “*Mana aiva manushyanam karnam bandha moshkyo*” (that is, cause of bondage and salvation of a human being is the mind alone). If the worldly pleasure is required, the mind will provide it, and if the ultimate truth - *moksha* is needed, the mind will give this too. The mind always remains in the service of a person like a faithful servant. It is never tired. It never stops. It never gets old. Continuous work is its habit. It takes pleasure in making desires and chasing the same.

The power of the mind is unlimited. But it also has the vice of selfwilledness. The uncontrolled mind is like a camel without nose-halter, which deviates a person from his path. Instead of taking home - the destination of life, it throws a person in the jungle of sensual pleasures, desires, sorrows, quarrels, wickedness, bad habits, etc. A person forgets why he has taken birth and what the goal of life is. Instead, this life becomes hell. The origin of all *siddhis* lies in the continence

of mind. But they are not obtainable by a simple effort. The *sadhana* of mind is more difficult than any *yoga*, etc. That is why the scripture says – “*Jitam jagat ken? Mano hi yen*” (that is, one who has conquered his mind, has also conquered this world).

The examples of how the mind makes the body dance to the tune of circumstances and incidents are witnessed very often. The episodes of a faded face under the disturbed state, sleeplessness during the troublesome period, to blossom at the time of happy events, etc. prove the intimate relationship of the mind and the body. A happy and joyful mind makes the body healthy, and a stressful mind leads to sickness/disease.

Therefore, one should analyze when he has mental stress due to something happening in his life. A person may have suffered financial loss in business, or he is not able to find the right partner for marriage, or he has failed in examinations or could not do well in a job interview; or there is a misunderstanding with the spouse, etc. Any one of these reasons can potentially disturb one’s mind and cause stress. If this is not quickly resolved and mind freed from it, then it can result in sickness or disease. When things are not getting resolved, try to adapt to the situation and make a compromise instead of fighting with it. If a shortage of resources cannot be resolved, try not to overthink it. Many people in the world are dealing with poverty, unemployment, and failure, but they are surviving, and you too can handle little lack of resources. If you adopt a formula to stay happy under any circumstance, then any challenge will appear trivial. This

I believe that the greatest gift you can give your family and the world  
is a healthy you. - **Joyce Meyer**

will spare you from the undue stress and the resultant ill-health. You have to ensure to stay away from mental disturbances.

If you love music, then this will come handy in promoting good health. Music relaxes the mind and strengthens the nervous system. Those who laugh heartily will never have to worry about diseases related to the liver or digestive system. The chest becomes strong, and the rest of the body remains healthy in general. In times of worry and distress, a light-hearted person will face it with much lesser stress and tolerate it better. Dwelling on failures for long is the primary cause of disease since energies of the mind get dissipated continuously.

Loneliness doesn't do any less harm than mental stress. Especially when a person is in a challenging or worrisome situation, it can be more stressful and daunting if he has to handle it alone. Anything that gnaws at one's mind for a long time can cause maximum damage to health. We should learn to share not only our happiness but also our worries with others. Sharing concerns with friends, spouse, and well-wishers take the pressure off your chest. It is good to talk to them, ask for their opinion, and take whatever help is possible. Knowing the fact that you have cooperation and sympathy from others can boost your spirits and ease your mind. This certainly makes a positive impact on health.

Try to avoid being jealous of other's progress because jealousy is an enemy of the mind. A jealous person loses

the ability to think and behave right. His mind is engrossed in suicidal thoughts, and most of his physical strength is wasted in unnecessary plots to outdo others. As a result of this mental and physical drain, such people tend to be irritable at the slightest pretext. The resulting anger, dizziness, incoherent thinking, etc. are some of the conditions that harm the body. We should be happy to see others' progress. We should experience peace and happiness in loving interactions with others. As we strive for our joy and comfort, we should also be sensitive to others' pleasures.

Our ancient seers and yogacharyas invented unique methods of *sadhanas* to clean, purify, concentrate, make steady, and control the mind. They emphasized that continuous practice and wisdom, the mind can be controlled. Lord Krishna, while giving a discourse to Arjun tells (The Gita, 35/6) – “*Manodurnigrahamchalam abhyasen tu kaunteya vairagyena cha grahyate.*” Adya

Throughout history, great healers have discovered the power of breathing to enhance the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of their people.

- Richard P. Brown

“ Nobody can be in good health if he does not have all the time fresh air, sunshine, and good water. - Native American saying ”

Shankaracharya has explained it elaborately. Herein the essence of *Abhayas* is to practice those *Sadhanas* of *yoga*, which stop the mind from wavering. The spirit of *vairagya* (freedom from passion) is to discipline one's practical life. Conquering the greed is *vairagya*. According to Adya Shankaracharya, the mind is directly related to the process of breathing. By controlling and regulating this process, the mind can be controlled. With the help of *Pranayama* (breath control) and *Dhyana - Sadhana* (meditation), the unsteadiness, sensuality, and the wild desires of mind can be stopped and be brought under the control of enlightened intelligence.

The seers/sages of yore say - "*Manah matas devo chaturvarg pradayakam*" (meaning - all the powers providing *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha* (i.e., the realization of responsibilities, fair means of earning, pleasure and salvation) are hidden within the mind. If the mind can be controlled, what to say of health, it can change the entire course of life. That is why it has been said that one, who has conquered the mind, has conquered the whole world.



The gut is the seat of all feelings. Polluting the gut not only cripples your immune system, but also destroys your sense of empathy, the ability to identify with other humans. Bad bacteria in the gut create neurological issues. Autism can be cured by detoxifying the bellies of young children. People who think that feelings come from the heart are wrong. The gut is where you feel the loss of a loved one first. It's where you feel pain and a heavy bulk of your emotions. It's the central base of your entire immune system. If your gut is loaded with negative bacteria, it affects your mind. Your heart is the seat of your conscience. If your mind is corrupted, it affects your conscience. The heart is the Sun. The gut is the Moon. The pineal gland is Neptune, and your brain and nervous system (5 senses) are Mercury. What affects the moon or sun affects the entire universe within. So, if you poison the gut, it affects your entire nervous system, your sense of reasoning, and your senses.

- Suzy Kassem



Sickness – nature's vengeance for violating her laws. - **Charles Simmons**

## *Jahi Śatruṁ Mahābāho Kāmarūpaṁ Durāsadam* (O mighty-armed Arjuna, conquer this insatiable enemy of lust!)

Lord Shri Krishna is explaining to Arjuna the significance of self-control in the following two *ślokas*:

*Indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāga dveṣau vyavasthitau Ḍ  
Tayor na vaśamāgacchetau hyasya paripanthinauḥ (34/3)*

Meaning: Attraction and aversion of senses to their corresponding sense-objects is unavoidable. (However) one should not be controlled by them since they are obstacles in one's path.

*Śreyānswadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuśthitāt Ḍ  
Svadharme nidhanam śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ Ḥ  
(35/3)*

Meaning: One's own dharma (prescribed duty), though devoid of merit, is better than another's dharma perfectly followed. Even death is superior in performing one's own dharma. But following another's dharma is fraught with dangers.

The Gita is a scientific book educating the people about the process of making a human being. Herein, Shri Krishna is opening the mysteries of man's failures in life to Arjuna. In *śloka* (34/3), he says that in this diverse world, everyone may have one's own *rāgas* and *dveṣas*. The likes and dislikes of one person may not match with that of the other. *Rāga* is a sense of attraction that a person experiences when he gets his favorite object or favorable atmosphere. For example, a drunkard would love a bottle of wine, and a sadhaka would prefer the fruits. We hate things that are against our passion. The kind of our

desires decides the intensity of our love or hate for anything. That is why a person desirous of attaining salvation should be free from *rāgas* and *dveṣas*. The common man, however, should be alert so that the senses of attraction and aversion do not compel him to indulge in some heinous act. In fact, such tendencies should not become deep-rooted traits that may create problems later.

Shri Krishna is advising that a person should undoubtedly conquer the lower tendencies, but should not go against his nature. Why? Because it is better to walk on one's chosen path than following others. The same thing has been said in *śloka* (35/3). Sticking to one's dharma is better than adopting other's way of life (dharma).

Some scholars might feel that the Lord is orthodox and is propagating *varnashram* dharma. It may also appear that the then society was in favor of maintaining the status quo regarding the caste system. That is, the one who is born in the Kshatriya caste should be ready for war, and the Brahman should always follow an intellectual life. But when one contemplates deeply, one

Good health and good sense are two of life's greatest blessings.

- Publilius Syrus

finds a mysteriously hidden meaning of this *śloka*.

‘*Svadharmā*,’ which has been talked about by the Lord, is nothing but our own desires and inner traits. Our lust guides them. Our nature forms our character, which becomes a medium for the expression of our persona in society. In order to become a better person, we should try to eliminate the cravings with which we are born by engaging ourselves in selfless work. This is dear to God.

Param Pujya Gurudev has explained the word ‘*Svadharmā*’ in the context of prescribed duty. He says, ‘We should perform our prescribed duty considering it as Lord’s work. One should not change one’s path on getting allured by something.’ In the book ‘Guruvar ki Dharohar – part -1’ (Amrit Vani), he says, ‘In order to follow the principles I have faced my opponents, Mahamandaleshwaras, Shankaracharyas, etc.; cut the bondage of golden chains. All my life, I have been fighting alone for you, the society, the world, and the rights of women. In order to fight immorality and impropriety, I have started Yug Nirman Yojana (Plan for ushering in New Era) and Vichar Kranti Abhiyan (Thought Revolution). In this context, I am a

Rajput. Each and every pore of my being is filled with bravery and courage.’ Param Pujya Gurudev, who has imbibed the philosophy of Brahmanism, is providing us the direct guidance through these words – how should our lives be. He has explained the *Svadharmā* in the broader context of dharma. In the present times, our dharma is to follow the path shown by our Gurudev, propagate the thought current of Yug Nirman extensively, be ready to refine the thoughts of everyone, including the self. This is *Yugdharma* - the religion of our times. We have to make it our *Svadharmā*; we must not go against it.

Listening to the cryptic discussion of *ślokas* (34//3 and 35/3), the inquiring mind of Arjuna asks a question –

*Atha kena prayukto 'yam pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ Ḍ  
Anicchinnapi vārṣṇeya balādiva niyojitaḥ Ḥ (36/3)*

Meaning: What is it that incites one to commit sinful acts even against one’s will, O Varshneya (Krishna), as if compelled by force?

This perennial question has been haunting the minds of human beings. Arjuna, too, wants to know who is that satan who incites him to sin, compels him to cross over his knowledge. Lord answers this question very lucidly –

*Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ Ḍ  
Mahāsano mahāpāpmā viddhyenamih vairiṇam Ḥ (37/3)*

Meaning: It is the lust that becomes anger arising from rajoguna; know this lust to be insatiable, extremely sinful, and all-powerful enemy in this world.

When the desire to acquire something becomes a passion, then it takes the form of lust for using it. Any obstacle

Cheerfulness is the best promoter of health and is as friendly to the mind as to the body. - **Joseph Addison**

in the fulfillment of lust gives rise to anger. In a fit of rage, we infringe on our ideals and spoil ourselves in the process. Virtues cannot express themselves.

Sex and anger are produced by rajoguna, that is, mental restlessness for sense gratification. The sense of inner incompleteness makes us mad to acquire material objects and use them. The delay in obtaining such objects annoys us. It is the lust and anger that impel people, communities, groups, and nations to attack one another. That is why history has become a story of useless blood-stained destruction of human beings.

Param Pujya Gurudev used to say that we get burnt in the fire of lust. Anger and passion are the potent enemies of human beings. The more we try to appease, the more they get aggravated. If we can learn to do Bhagvat karma (selfless work for the benefit of society), our emotions will automatically get satiated.

Lord Shri Krishna says further –

*Dhūmenāvriyate vahniryathadarśo malena ca ḍ  
Yatholbenāvṛto garbhastatha tenedamāvṛtam ॥ (38/3)  
Āvṛtam jñānametena jñānino nityavairiṇā ḍ  
Kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇānalena ca ॥ (39/3)*

Meaning: Just as fire is surrounded by smoke, as a mirror by dust, and as an embryo is covered by the womb, so is this knowledge enveloped by that lust. O Arjuna, the discrimination of even the knowledgeable, is covered by this perpetual enemy of lust, which is like an unquenchable fire!

Our ancient culture has been elucidating the complicated philosophy in a few words. In *śloka* (38/3), three examples are given to demonstrate that the desires cover the wisdom of a person. These are the three curtains covering

the knowledge. Therefore, unless the wall of the passions of senses crumbles, the light of truth cannot be seen. In the Adi Parva of epic Mahabharata, there is an anecdote. King Yayati had an unbridled passion for tasting the pleasures of life. So he took the youthfulness of his sons and enjoyed material pleasures for thousands of years. Even then, his lust was not satisfied. Finally, he handed over the reins of his kingdom to his son Puru and took Sannyasa. There is no end to the pleasures of senses; neither one gets peace in it. It is the renunciation that gives peace and leads to *Moksha* (salvation).

When the desire arises for completing some auspicious resolve and is reflected in the form of service to society, it is *sattvic* (virtuous). Though it is also covering the knowledge but this covering is like a smoke surrounding the fire. Strong willpower, the grace of Guru, and the blow of good impressions are enough to remove this smoke and reveal the true nature of fire. So long as our desires are *tamasik* (a state of darkness, ignorance, lethargy, and inactivity), we will have to work hard to refine our lower traits.

Lord has called *kamagni* (sexual fire) as never satiating passion. It is the sex that is the fierce enemy of

The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician. Therefore the physician must start from nature, with an open mind. – **Paracelsus**

knowledge. In order to let Arjuna have an in-depth understanding of the topic, Shri Krishna says –

*Indriyāṇi mano  
buddhirsyādhiṣṭhānamucyate  
Etairvimohayatyeṣa jñānamāvṛtya  
dehinam ॥ (40/3)  
Tasmāttvamindriyāṅyādaṁ niyamyā  
bharatarṣabha ॥  
Pāpmānaṁ prajahi hyenaṁ  
jñānavijñānanāśanam ॥ (41/3)*

Meaning: The senses, mind, and intellect are said to be the seat of lust; covering one's discrimination, the enemy of lust deludes the living entities. Therefore, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna), first you must bring the senses under control, and destroy this sinful lust, the destroyer of knowledge and realization!

What Lord has explained to Arjuna is the essence of all the spiritual

philosophies and the science of sadhana. It has been clearly said that lust confuses the senses, the mind, and the intellect and, in the process, leads to distress. The passion covers the light of knowledge, which makes the senses, mind, and intellect get engaged in heinous crimes. That is why Lord is advising Arjuna first to control his senses and then do anything else.

Param Pujya Gurudev has advised that the control of senses, thoughts, time, and money are essential for a social volunteer. Among the senses, he considered the control of tongue and sex to be very important. One who has controlled these two has conquered the self. Why only volunteers, it is also essential for a common householder. Pujya Gurudev has explained in his literature the necessity of *aswad vrat* (eating food without salt, sugar, and spices), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and the practice of *maun* (keeping silence). According to him, the sadhana of Gayatri is successful only when the intellect is illumined after removing the cover of lust.

Due to our negligence, we fall prey to lustful tendencies. That is why Lord Shri Krishna is warning us to keep awake, do not sleep on the steering wheel, do not allow wisdom to faint. For this purpose, Lord is again giving a formula in the last two *ślokas* of this chapter –



A mahatma was climbing a steep hill when he saw a 10-year old girl carrying her 2-year old brother and climbing the mountain. He asked, "Child, How are you able to climb carrying such a burden?" The girl immediately replied, "O Great One; this is not a burden, but my younger brother."

Wherever there is love, no work will appear difficult or burdensome. Only when one is devoid of emotion will life seem dreary. A true feeling of family is where the innate surge of love and emotion that is felt for one another dominates everything else.



It takes more than just a good looking body. You've got to have the heart and soul to go with it. – **Epictetus**

*Indriyāni parānyāhurindriyebhyaḥ param manah* ॥  
*Mansastu parā buddhiryo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ* ॥ (42/3)  
*evam buddheḥ param buddhvā samstabhyātmānamātmanā* ॥  
*Jahi śatruṃ mahābāho kāmarūpaṃ durāsadam* ॥ (43/3)

Meaning: They say that the senses are superior (to the body); superior to the senses is the mind; superior to the mind is the intellect. The one who is superior even to the intellect is individual consciousness. Thus, knowing this consciousness to be superior to the intellect, O mighty-armed Arjuna, steady the mind by self-realization and conquer this insatiable enemy in the form of lust.

It is a fascinating aspect of the poetry of Srimadbhagavadgita to highlight the essence of dhyana yoga after the completion of karma yoga and give a formula for living a holistic life. Herein the Lord has shown the highway to self-realization by establishing that senses are superior to the physical body, the mind is superior to senses, intellect is superior to the mind, and the soul is superior to intelligence. Thus one can conquer the senses only after knowing the self. In the last two ślokas, Lord has fully exposed the human persona. We cannot understand how to control the senses unless we dive deeper. As getting rich is the solution of poverty, the establishment of peace is the solution of war; in the same way, keeping us away from intellect and achieving self-realization can we conquer the enemy of lust.

In the last ten ślokas of this chapter on karma yoga, Lord has taught Arjuna how can the supreme state of consciousness be awakened. Bringing the desires at the level of soul and making them pure, one can become desireless. In this state, the control of senses, mind, and intellect is done by the soul; when this regulation is achieved, the insatiable enemy of passion is destroyed, and a person becomes

desireless. This is the essence of this chapter. In fact, living a selfless life is yagya. So, when the communities start living selfless lives, then the process of change of era begins. We find this philosophy in the thoughts of Param Pujya Gurudev.

We will complete this chapter with one anecdote. Lahiri Mahashaya was a common householder, but he was also an accomplished sadhaka. Once, he visited Benaras, where he met Tailang Swami (a renowned sannyasi). The latter paid respects to Lahiri Mahashaya. Lahiri Mahashaya embraced him. The disciples of sannyasi Tailang Swamiji said – ‘You are awadhoot, a siddha (an accomplished yogi), then why did you pay respect to a householder?’ Tailang Swami said – ‘This dhoti-clad person, by engaging in selfless work, has achieved that supreme element for which I had to abandon the clothes.’ Even an ordinary person can achieve self-realization if he lives a selfless life that is dedicated to the Lord. The context of Param Pujya Gurudev and Mahatma Anand Swami also conveys that by the sadhana of desireless karmayoga, it is possible to achieve the supreme state.

•••

“ The wish for healing has always been half of health. - **Lucius Annaeus Seneca** ”



# Rejuvenate Your Body with Massage Therapy

**A**n ancient Ayurveda scripture has sung the paeans of praise for a massage therapy as follows –

*Vātavyādhi harati kurute sarva  
gātreṣu puṣṭhiṃ ॐ*

*Dr̥ṣṭi mandāmīpa*

*vitānutevaivateyoyām ca ॥*

*Nidrām saukhyam janapati jaram*

*hanti śakti vidhatai ॐ*

*Dhattekānti kanaka sadr̥śīm*

*nityamabhyang yogāt ॥*

Meaning- ‘Regular oil massage cures arthritis, nurtures limbs, improves vision, gives rise to sound sleep and happiness, keeps infirmity at bay, generates energy and gives a golden radiance to the body.’

Thus massage is an extremely beneficial therapy in rejuvenating the body. The primary function of massage is to speed up blood circulation. The heart performs this task. It makes pure (oxygenated) blood flow through the arteries to all parts of the body, while the impure blood is carried back through the veins to the heart for purification. The process of cleaning becomes slow if the blood from the veins does

not reach the heart in sufficient quantity. Consequently, the veins remain under-active. But, massage produces heat in these veins, and blood begins to circulate rapidly. The heart rate also increases in the same proportion, and pure blood begins to flow in the entire body. The purpose of massage is to help the nerves in the process of blood-purification.

Massage is an art that helps in augmenting the blood supply to all the organs of the body. The heat generated by massage can melt the blood clots and also remove small knots which have been formed in the veins (varicose veins), especially in the lower extremities of the body. The blood becomes less viscous, and hence the lungs can easily remove contamination from it. During the massage, the body is also exercised lightly, so it feels lighter and more active. This process helps in removing the ailments and disorders of the lungs, liver, spleen, small and large intestines, thyroid gland, and the spinal cord.

Massage is the best way to stimulate the activity of various organs, digestive power, production of digestive juices, absorption of the digested food in the body, and the cleansing activities. There are about three hundred and forty-seven muscles in the human body, out of which forty- four are present near the outer surface. While other exercises can induce movement in these external muscles, a deep massage is required to provide healing and change in the internal ones. This ushers activity in the inactive organs, and these muscles begin to grow. The ones which have become fat or clumsy soon acquire their actual shape. Massage has a significant effect on the nervous system of

“ Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease. – Hippocrates ”

the body. It stimulates the nerves, which removes fatigue and causes relaxation. Massaging the aching nerves reduces their pain. Mustard oil is more suitable for this process. Along with a therapeutic power, it also provides coolness and lubrication to the body. Glands get nourishment, and skin disorders are cured. Manually processed pure oil is more beneficial than the one produced in the mill. Those who can afford should use coconut oil. Coconut trees are often higher than all other trees, so they can draw substantial energy from the rays of the sun. It also provides natural vitamins. In some diseases like paralysis, rye (a strong alcoholic drink) or sesame oil is also used. Filling coconut oil in colored glass bottles and keeping it in the sun for a few days also makes it useful in treating these diseases.

The main styles of massage include - (1) *Gharshan* (friction) (2) *Dandan* (massaging of deep muscles) (3) *Thapki* (patting) (4) *Kampan* (vibrating) and (5) *Sandhi Prasaran* (massaging the joints). All these different styles are used according to the physical condition of the patient and the disease. *Gharshan* is the rubbing of the upper surface of the body using the palms while applying constant pressure. In this technique, the hands are moved swiftly to produce heat in the blood. The speed should be between 30-80 rounds per minute and should be done until the pores absorb all the oil. Only smearing the oil or rubbing it superficially does not prove beneficial. In this process, every time the movement of the hands should be towards the heart. For example, if the feet are being massaged, then hands should move from the calf towards the thigh. In this way, by massaging all the body parts one by one, the skin diseases are cured, the skin becomes clean, soft, and lubricated, and toxins from other organs also removed. Massaging different parts of the body has many benefits. Massaging the pelvis relieves constipation. Massaging the joints helps in alleviating the pain of arthritis. Massaging the fatty areas of the body reduces obesity, and the body regains

its original shape. Scalp massage is a cure for insomnia. Rubbing of the gums is also a type of massage, which strengthens the teeth. Massage burns down the extra sugar in diabetic patients. Regular massage of the body should be done in ailments like paralysis, indigestion, sciatica, stone formation, weakness of liver, ovarian problems, and pleurisy; it provides instant relief.

Those who do not have the means and time for massage should thoroughly rub all parts of the body while bathing. This action of rubbing should be similar to massage – that is, from the extremities towards the heart. In this way, bathing also produces the same benefits that are obtained from any oil or herbal paste. After bathing, the whole body should be rubbed and wiped with a thick towel. This makes blood circulation swift and active. Taking a bath with glycerin soap or *Multani mitti* is very beneficial for cleaning the pores and dirt caused by the combination of oil with the sweat produced from massage. This cools down the body. Everyone, whether rich or poor, sick or healthy, child, old or young, can rejuvenate his body with the massage. This is an extremely harmless therapy.



Hearty laughter is a good way to jog internally without having to go outdoors.

- Norman Cousins

## Sadhana and Sanjeevani (Elixir of Sadhana) -1

The deal for the purchase of land for Gayatri Tapobhumi was finalized at rupees six thousand. Shriram had no ready capital or resource for this purchase. Taiji offered to sell some of the property and bonds of Zamindaari they owned in Anwalkheda. But Shriram had already denied this offer. He did not want to take more than rupees eleven hundred that she had already vowed for. The magazines and books written and published by him were already kept at a minimal price, so the sales were just sufficient to manage the wheel moving. The interest on deposits of annual subscriptions of Akhand Jyoti was used in the publication of the books. And income from books was consumed in the paper, ink and printing charges for Akhand Jyoti.

Just about a month ago, he had planned to publish a series of specialized books on *Gayatri Mahavidya*. His books titled “*Gayatri Yoga*,” “*Gayatri Tantra*,” “*Yagya Vigyan*,” and “*Gayatri ki Uchchastariya Sadhana*” were already published. Now he wanted to write a comprehensive volume on “*Gayatri Mahavigyan*.” His objective was that this should

be an authentic treatise containing the knowledge of Gayatri extracted from the *Shastras* (ancient Indian texts), the evidential experiences and views of the *siddhas*, accomplished *sadhakas*, scholars and great personalities with the Gayatri Mantra, and thorough analysis of this Mantra and effects of its *japa-sadhana* in a scientific light. He wanted that the volume should be complete so that no seeker of any knowledge or information on Gayatri would have to search for any other texts.

*Navratri's* time was still ahead by more than a month. Shriram had to arrange for money before this. But the major problem was from where to collect it. He used to wear handloom *Kurta* and *Dhoti*. While going for some meeting or formal program, he would put on a handloom jacket – that is all. He only had two or three *kurtas* and *dhotis*. Mataji's living was also austere like him. As such, there was no shortage of money, but they never felt the need for any more clothes or other facilities. That way, they both hailed from well-off families. An exceptionally brilliant, sagacious scholar like Shriram could have been among the who's who of the world, but he and Mataji had opted for austere lifestyle by choice. This is what suited their saintly attitude.

Whatever income he used to get from the literature or whatever amount or support was received as donations were used for propagation of *Gayatri Mahavidya*. Books and magazines about this precious knowledge were the primary means of its further dissemination. He had also written some books to eliminate the prevalent misconceptions about spirituality and Indian Culture.

“ The ingredients of health and long life are great temperance, open-air, easy labor, and little care. - Philip Sidney ”

All these were published on an almost no-profit basis. His writings were so thoughtful, logical, and inspiring that anyone who had ever read any of his articles/books wanted to read him more. His style of writing was so lucid that even more in-depth knowledge used to be easily grasped by the readers. By 1950, over one hundred of his books were published.

Ever since the proposal for Gayatri Tapobhumi was finalized, they often used to discuss about resources required for it. But there was no tension as such. Shriram was firm on his idea that the land should be purchased using their own (personal) resources. People's collective contributions should be accepted only after that for construction.

His resources were his personal property, and the minimal income from the magazine and books. Taiji suggested him to sell the share he deserved from the ancestral property in the native village (Anvalkheda). But he repeated the pledge that village property should be used only for the development of the village. He already got Taiji's approval for opening a school on the land he owned there. But Taiji said, now in view of our urgent requirements for another good purpose we should sell it. But Shriram did not budge. Then she suggested to lend it or to mortgage it, for some time for six thousand rupees.

Shriram did not refuse this advice outright. First, he thought it was a good alternative. But soon, he was out of the dilemma. He said – "Taiji! We can lend or mortgage only our property. But that is no longer our property. I have already pledged to donate it for the development (mainly through education) of Anvalkheda. So now I have no moral right on it. For me, it is now the property of the village".

Taiji kept insisting - "Look, my son! We are not breaking the promise. We did not say when the school would be built. So we can always do that later after the present need is over. See, it is going to be only a temporary arrangement to meet the emergency".

But Shriram was not convinced. He said – "If we donate money in a temple, then it becomes the property of the temple. No matter how long that amount is kept unused, we never use it for our purposes or borrow it anymore".

Now Taiji had given up on this advice. Shriram was again engrossed in thoughts. Mataji was quietly listening to their conversation so far.

After the silence of a few moments, Shriram suggested that we should sell off our press. Maybe after a couple of years, we will be able to repurchase it. In the meantime, we shall get the magazine and books printed in some other press.

"But even this won't serve the purpose. We won't get rupees six thousand from it," – Taiji remarked. Shriram told that they will get about two thousand rupees from it and will find out some way to arrange for the remaining".

My personal goals are to be happy, healthy, and to be surrounded by loved ones.

- Kiana Tom

Now Mataji immediately suggested this ‘some way.’ She offered to sell off her jewelry. “After all what is the use of this jewelry for me” – she said. Mataji had earrings, necklace, *kangan* (pair of thick bangles), waist-lace, and some other gold jewelry such as *hansuli* (a traditional styled heavy chain), etc. They estimated the cost and found that the total price of this and the press would be more than six thousand. Mataji said we should try selling the jewelry first; if that itself is sufficient, there is no need to sell the press. The machines of the press are used every day. There will be lots of problems without this. Having or not having jewelry is immaterial.

After this planning, Shriram’s mind was free of the first problem on the way of Gayatri Tapobhumi. Now the purchase and formalities of registration etc. were to be completed in the near future. The plan of *Sahasranshu Brahm-Yagya* that was approved in the meeting of the volunteers a couple of days ago had been formatted for printing. (This was the beginning of the foundation of a global family-like organization “Gayatri Pariwar”). A notice in this regard was to go in Akhand Jyoti and other magazines edited/written by Shriram. It was also agreed upon to mail this message and plan of the

special *yagya* of collective participation separately to all *parijans* and acquaintances for broader circulation. Shriram kept the handwritten manuscript of this matter in his *sadhana* room in front of the *Akhand Deepaka*. It was to go to press the next day.

### **Sprinkled Spots of Saffron**

It was someday in January last week. Vasant Panchami was round the corner. The manuscript of the *Sahasranshu Brahma-Yagya* plan and message inviting *sadhakas* for collective participation was kept in *sadhana* room in the night. In the morning, it was found that it had some saffron spots sprinkled on it! Mataji was the first witness to this miracle. When Mataji went into the *sadhana* room the early morning before dawn to clean it and arrange necessary tools for worship on the *puja vedi*, she saw some saffron-colored spots on the manuscript. She noticed it but thought maybe the paper itself had some design, or maybe her husband had sprinkled these as part of worship before placing these papers here in the feet of the deity.

After taking a bath when Shriram entered the *sadhana*-room for his daily *japa-upasana*, he was surprised to see the saffron spots on the manuscript. He asked Mataji about it. Now it was clear before them that this is the blessing of the Omnipotent Goddess Gayatri. But Shriram told Mataji not to let anyone else know about it, as otherwise, this news will spread, and people would get trapped in curiosity or blind faith in miracles and supernatural events, etc.

Shriram used to say that the color of saffron is the same as that of the rising sun. It symbolizes piety and radiance and is therefore given so much importance in the Indian Culture.

After his *japa-upasana* that day, Shriram sent the

The man who earns a million but destroys his health in the process is not really a success. - Zig Ziglar

manuscript for composing in the press. Akhand Jyoti magazine's next issue was due in March 1952. So there were still two months by the time it would reach the readers. In order to send timely information so that more and more people could be informed, the composed material was also separately printed in pamphlet form and was posted to all readers and acquaintances.

Gayatri Tapobhumi was to be inaugurated next year on Gayatri Jayanti, i.e., about a year-and-half from the time the pamphlets were dispatched. The collective *anushthan sadhana* "Shasranshu Brahmyagya" was to continue till then. It was really a large-scale endeavor. For this purpose, all *parijans* were guided to do ten rosary count (i.e., 10x108 times, which requires repeated *japa* for about one hour) *japa* of Gayatri Mantra every day. The total number of *japas* to be completed collectively in the prescribed duration was 125 million times. As this was an *Anushthan*, *parijans* were advised to observe fasting on specific days apart from regular fasting of one day per week. They were also supposed to offer one-hundredth of the *japa* count oblations, i.e., a total of 1.25 million *ahutis* (oblations of herbal preparation) in *yagya* with loud chanting of this Mantra. They were therefore advised to arrange a series of *yagyas* at different places to fulfill this requirement till Gayatri Jayanti next year. Doing altruistic services and spreading good literature and good thoughts were also part of this unprecedented collective endeavor. It was expected that this experiment would train nearly 1.25 lakhs (one hundred twenty-five thousand) dedicated Gayatri *Sadhakas*.

The pamphlet reached all *parijans* and acquaintances. They also passed on the messages to other like-minded persons. About ten to fifteen percent of those whom the news reached, enthusiastically agreed to participate. Some

people expressed disagreement. According to them, except for the authorized ones, nobody else should do the *japa-upasana* of the Gayatri Mantra. Shriram had made it clear in the message that there is no constraint of gender, caste, or creed. Anyone whose lifestyle, thoughts, and conduct are *satvika* can do the *japa* of Gayatri Mantra. He received some letters protesting against this liberal approach.

### Response to Criticism

His approach was criticized during a function in the Girls' Intermediate College at Mathura. The occasion was the celebration of Independence Day. Renowned personalities and scholars of Indian Culture present in the city were invited on this occasion. Shriram was also among the invited speakers. After seeing him sitting on the Dias, one learned speaker twisted his speech. He said – "We are independent, but some people are misusing this right to disobey our traditional norms. They are advocating and allowing the knowledge of holy Vedas, Gayatri Mantra, and *Yagya* freely accessible to everybody. This is not freedom; this is indiscipline. Sagacious scholars should come forward to stop such arbitrary practices".

The scholars present on this occasion could easily guess whom the speaker

Health is the condition of wisdom, and the sign is cheerfulness -  
an open and noble temper. - **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

was pointing at. Shriram had been receiving such challenges or criticism from orthodox religious leaders and scholars indirectly – either via some messengers or through letters. Whenever necessary, Shriram used to respond adequately. But here, the situation was different. Pandit Vallabh Pandey completed his speech indirectly focused on Shriram’s criticism. Then Mr. Maniram Sharma stood to speak. His speech was somewhat more acrimonious in trying to prove that Shriram’s approach was condemnable.

Then someone else spoke. His address was mainly for the students. The function was proceeding smoothly. But the bitter criticism triggered by the earlier two speakers had raised many eyebrows. Everyone on the Dias seemed to be wanting clarification from Shriram. Some eyes were looking at him with anger and scorn as though he had committed a crime. On his turn, the compere Prof. Ramadhar Dwivedi invited Pandit Shriram Sharma to speak.

Shriram gracefully walked to the mike and started speaking in his usual serene style. He eloquently elaborated upon the universal dignity of Indian Culture and cited authentic references of the ancient texts about

Gayatri Mantra and *Yagya*.

Mentioning excerpts of these texts he made the point clear that anyone (irrespective of caste, creed or gender) who regards and follows the ideals of a *rishi* as a guide and who adopts the *yagya*-teaching of altruistic attitude and ethical conduct has the right to chant and do *japa-sadhana* of Gayatri Mantra and participate in the fire-ritual of *yagya*. He said – ‘As far as strict adoption of all ritualistic practices is concerned, the *Smriti*-scriptures (doctrines) of *rishis* like Manu, Yagyavalkya, Apastamb, etc. say even if a Brahmin fails in doing the regular worship rituals (*sandhya-vandan*) and *japa* of Gayatri Mantra for three or more days, he is a “*Vratya Sangyaka*” – an immoral person, one who has fallen from religion. Specific kinds of *prayschhit* (penitence with penance) are recommended for such a person. After completing these, the defaulter also has to get his thread-ceremony done again.’

Shriram’s speech was persuasive and gripping. He further reminded the august audience – ‘We are now driven by the medieval time’s misinterpretation and distortion of many of our ancient cultural teachings; for example, we have linked the *varna* system to caste and creed. Whom we regard as *shudras* today are those whose ancestors, as per the authentic ancient texts available today, were the authors of several Vedic Hymns and teachings. For example, Chhandogya Upanishad mentions that a *gadiwan* (cartman) Raikya had taught Vedas to Janshruti; but, according to our classification today, a *gadiwan* is counted as a *shudra*. Rishi Mahidhar has written a commentary on Aitreya Upanishad. He also was a *shudra* by the so-called caste. Noted scholar and Acharya of later times – Sayana - in his commentaries on Vedic texts, has written that he was born to a *dasi* (maid-servant). Maha-Aitareya Upanishad mentions of *Kavasheya* scholars teaching the deeper science and philosophy of *yagya*. Their community also was *shudra* by creed. Rishi

“ One thing that does seem to be clear is that health and happiness are connected, more so than we’re often aware. - **Bobby Duffy** ”

Elush was also born as *shudra*, but he has written many mantras in the tenth mandala of the Rig Veda.’

Citing the Shrauta Sutras of *rishi* Bharadwaj and *rishi* Katyayan, Shriram pointed out—‘These Sutras recommend that anyone who is devoted and prepared to do *yagya* (i.e., has goodwill and also does good deeds and service) should be allowed to do *yagya* (fire-ritual). He also informed that the Shastras mention of one King Sudas who belonged to a *shudra* family but was renowned for his expertise in Vedic knowledge. Rishi Vashishtha had presided over the sacraments of King Sudas’ enthronement.’

Shriram’s discerning arguments had not only responded to his critics but also made the audience aware of the fact that it is one’s conduct and deeds and not one’s creed or caste that was given importance in our Vedic Culture. Interestingly his speech did not stray from the topic of the talk as, with the citing of Shastric evidence, he also underlined the fact that Independent India should regain its lost glory by getting rid of the misconceptions and superstitions of the medieval times and by progressing as a caste-free nation that nurtures human values.

His brilliant talk was well-received and admired by the audience with applause. The two ‘scholars’ who had pointed fingers against him quietly disappeared from there. Prof. Ramadhar Dwivedi told after the function that he wanted to call those Pandits to respond if they had any doubts in what you said, but they were not traceable. Many scholars and other dignitaries present on occasion warmly greeted Shriram and praised his speech.



[To be continued]

## Dive Deeper and Capture Riches

Visible material prosperity is not everything. The virtues (giving rise to riches) that are hidden deep within the human psyche are more important. The shadow of the tree is seen on the surface, but its roots are buried under the ground. The snails can be easily collected at the seashore, but there is no way other than diving deeper to get the pearls. Sand and pebbles are spread all over the earth’s surface, but to get the precious metals, one has to reach the deeper layers of the earth.

One can earn prosperity through hard work and dedication, but to develop humane qualities, one has to eradicate the evil traits with a penetrative eye. The divine virtues are present in the inner being but a thoughtful and persistent effort is required to awaken them. This process is similar to mining the gems. Let us mine the treasure of virtues that are lying dormant within us and earn the riches which are essential for the upliftment of self and the welfare of society.

- Pujya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya

When centenarians are asked to divulge the secrets to their longevity, they invariably mention two factors: good genes and healthy living. - Deborah Carr



## Harness the Power of Sun to Augment Vitality and Abundance

Everyone knows that without the Sun, there is no possibility of life on earth. The lives of all the plants, animals, and humans on this planet are dependent on the Sun. All of the food produced on the planet is essentially the product of Sun's energy. Plants absorb light energy from the Sun through its green pigment (chlorophyll), creating a chemical reaction that produces carbohydrates. Plants are nourished by these carbohydrates. This process is called photosynthesis. A human's diet consists of vegetables and milk. The cow, buffalo, goat, etc. produce milk by eating the plants and vegetation. Thus, even indirectly, all food can be considered to be made available only from the Sun rays.

The Sun sends energy to earth in two invisible ways: infrared radiation and ultraviolet rays. Infrared radiation keeps our planet warm and intensifies biochemical activity. Ultraviolet rays are essential to the body as they stimulate the production of vitamin D. Vitamin D has a vital function in increasing calcium and phosphorus absorption from food. It plays a crucial role in skeletal development, immune

function, and blood cell formation. Treatment of various diseases by artificially generated infrared and ultraviolet rays has started. But the direct use of Sun rays is better than the benefits derived from other artificial measures. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), getting anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes of sunlight on your arms, hands, and face twice or thrice a week is enough to reap the vitamin D-boosting benefits of the Sun. Besides, sunshine has a unique ability to destroy bacteria. Medical scientists have found that sun rays can be beneficial in all types of diseases, including loss of appetite, dysentery, cough, boils, pimples, chronic eye diseases, mental imbalance, etc. In fact, there is a complete Sun Therapy for this purpose.

Since ancient times, the Vedic method of performing *Trikal Sandhya* (praying three times during the morning, noon and evening) was designed to take advantage of the beneficial power of the Sun. Ashrams, Gurukuls, etc. used to be in such a pleasant environment where there was plenty of sunlight, fresh air, a pure open sky, and a holy climate to reap the benefits of solar energy.

In a cold country, when there is no fog or clouds, and clean light comes on the earth, people are eager to sunbathe for an extended period with bare minimum clothing. Many legal measures have been enacted in those countries to take in sunlight as a unique opportunity. Still, in countries like India, it is easily accessible; so here people avoid the strong hot Sun and consider golden morning sunlight beneficial and sufficient.

Beyond physical interaction with the Sun, there is a tremendous benefit to gain from spiritual connection

He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything.

- Arabian Proverb

and meditation on the Sun. Ancient Indian scriptures guide that those who aspire for physical, material, and spiritual success must meditate on rising Sun (Savita) while chanting Gayatri Mantra at the time of Sunrise. They say:

1. All the resolves taken at Sunrise, accompanied by the worship of Savita, are completed.
2. In Astrology, Sun is considered the king of all the planets. Therefore, the worship of the Sun gives excellent planetary effects; the ill effects of other planets get minimized.
3. The Chakshohanishad gives Surya mantra to ward off eye problems like cataract, myopia (short-sightedness) and hyperopia (long-sightedness), blindness, etc.
4. Suryopanishad describes methods of worship to get excellent health.
5. Worship of Sun gives win over enemies. [Aditya Hrudaya Stotra of Agastya Muni is said to be instrumental in killing Ravana by Lord Rama]
6. Sun worship relieves one of the diseases of the skin, and heart, strengthens bones, and increases longevity. [It is said that Samba, son of Shri Krishna and Jambavati, when tired of his incurable skin disease tried to take permission from Shri Krishna for suicide, Shri Krishna advised him to worship Sun. Samba

was relieved of skin disease and regained his beauty and longevity.]

7. Sun worship gives abundance. [Raja Satrajit got *syamantak mani* from Sun God who was pleased by his devotion, which would give him 8000 kg of gold every day]
8. Exercising early morning with Surya Namaskar with twelve Surya mantras gives extreme physical strength and excellent wrestling capacity.
9. Varahamihira Bhatt attained excellency in Jyotishshastra through Sun worship for one full year.
10. Sun worship gives excellence in the medical field; it provides Aushadh-siddhi. [Chyavan rishi got his Ayurveda siddhi through Sun worship]

Therefore, let us harness the power of the Sun and augment our vitality, abundance, and spiritual capabilities.



Physical wellness is all about how your body functions. To function optimally, your body needs proper nourishment, exercise, and healthy habits.

- Robyn L. Gobin

One of the most important and core ways to improve your life is to develop a healthy diet and maintain it on a long term basis. - David Dashner

## Family is the Prime Training School of Spirituality - II

(Translation of a discourse - continued from the previous issue)

Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya's approach to spirituality was scientific, rationally convincing, and practical. He elucidated that spirituality is a science of holistic wellbeing and virtuous progress. Many people think one has to renounce family-life and all relations for spiritual growth. But this is only an illusory impression. Reality is quite the contrary. In this context, we are presenting the English version of Gurudev's discourse (originally in Hindi) in a series of articles. As discussed in the first part (published in the previous issue of this magazine), he had lucidly explained the broad meaning and integral role of the family in making us humane in the true sense. In the present part of the discourse, he has reminded us of the importance of family life in the cultivation of the values and traits essential for spiritual development.

### Sisters and Brothers,

If you pay little attention, you will find that there is a lot which the family-life naturally teaches you. First of all, it makes you a human being and nurtures the values and dignity of humanity and morality in your feelings, thoughts, and conduct. Family Nurtures Selflessness and Sensitivity

Family-life sustains and flourishes, to a great extent, on the foundation of selflessness and sensitivity and also nurtures and expands these spiritual qualities. By its very definition, a family is a group of people formed by the bonds of unconditional love and care for each other. You naturally

love your family; you are sensitive to the feelings of loved ones, you care for their happiness and wellbeing, and they reciprocate the same way. Even if someone does anything wrong, the warm care, guidance, and loving support of others in the family are supposed to make him realize and rectify his mistakes/weaknesses. If not, there will be a disturbance in the soothing ambiance of the family.

Selfishness and insensitivity cannot survive in family-life. For example, when you are in a normal state, will you ever eat something all alone and let your children, spouse, or any other family member stare at you? Will you let them starve, suffer scarcity and infirmity and use all your earnings only for your own comforts? Well, in terms of law and justice, it may not be considered as a crime if you do so; police may not punish or penalize you. But, what about the norms of humanity? Most likely, such actions/behavior of yours will be scorned off by other people as inhuman; no one aware of your inhuman conduct in the family would really respect you, or, make friendship with



The positive thinker sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible. - **Winston Churchill**



you. In terms of spirituality, any human being, who eats alone, who does not share his resources even with the family, is a sinner.

Similar would be the case if you are insensitive to the needs and sufferings of your dependents; or if you exploit the people around you for your selfish purposes. How will you respect a person who does not bother about the medical care of his elderly parents or his sick wife and lets them suffer? How will you regard a father who does not arrange for the marriage of his daughter because, after the demise of his wife, his daughter has been looking after his home? He will certainly be disdained by most people in society; spiritually, he will be considered as cruel and sinful.

A good family man would care and arrange for the wellbeing, education, and overall development of all his family members. He will also do his level best to help the healthy progress of relatives and friends in his contact.

### **Decorum of Family Shapes Your Character**

Dignity of a family rests on the propriety of character and mannerism of its members — especially the elders. The proper conduct of the elders is also essential because children follow them. People with loose character and lust for sensual pleasures cannot maintain it, and thus gradually also destroy the heavenly serenity and happiness of family-ambiance. Do you treat your wife like a prostitute? Do only the beauty of her appearance and the attractive looks of her physical body matter for you? If so, then you seem to have no respect for her and your entire family. In fact, such an attitude shows that you have no respect for women; outside or inside the home, you only see her with lustful eyes. If so, you insult the grace of family institution. Is your home a brothel? Are the women

in your family only show-pieces or tools of carnal pleasure of someone or the other? I am sure that you or any sensible person would not be able to tolerate any such consideration of any of your family members or any other relative.

Indeed, the family is a symbol of the dignity of civility, gentlemanliness; it is a natural field for cultivation, growth, and harvest of propriety of character. It is an ideal center for practicing self-control and the inculcation of moral values. Whenever and wherever your agile mind is triggered by the passion of instinctive pleasures, you can revert or divert its straying by simply reminding it of your innocent children, your duty-bound affectionate wife, or others whom you sincerely love, respect, or care.

For example, if erotic impulse erupts in your mind for any woman, you can instantly control it by remembering some touchy experience of your sister or mother. Before gulping a sip of alcohol, smoking, or drinking coco-cola (or any such drink or fast-food that gives instant excitation or taste, or that boosts weakness of your greedy tongue), you should think of your children's health, or fulfilling the necessities of their adequate nourishment. Just try it, it

In every person, there is a sun. Just let it shine. - **Socrates**

will work. You only have to practice it with patience.

If you care for them, if you love your family, if you have even little respect or gratefulness for the support and affection showered by your family, by any of your family member, relative or friend, then the thought/memory of any of them itself will instantly inspire and positively divert your mind/mood. Family-bonds, family-values, do have the power to overcome your negativities, blemishes, and infirmities, and also to help positive grooming of your character.

### **Learn to bear the Responsibilities before Marriage**

On many occasions, I have told people that before getting married, they should think twice about the familial and social responsibilities associated with marriage. Please note, married life is not like the fun and frolic of the wedding ceremony. Married life brings with it the enormous responsibilities of living together, mutual-understanding, sharing and caring, mutual-respect and collective endeavors of the development of the life-partner along

with self-development. Husband and wife also have duties toward each other's families and amicable relationship between the latter. Moreover, married couples also have some social responsibilities. Socially aware, responsible, and progressive families collectively contribute to build healthy social ambience and progressive society

Responsibilities of married couples expand manifold with the expansion of their families. They should be very careful in this respect and plan to have children after farsighted preparation. Before the birth of a child, the would-be parents should make sure that they would be able to raise him/her adequately. Nursing an infant is like a full-time job that requires your adequate attention, affection, and patience. The duties toward the child change in nature, but continuously grow with his/her growth. You should not only have resources but should also have the capabilities to nurture good qualities, provide good education and opportunities and support for his/her development.

The unaware, insensible fellows, who regard married life as a license for unchecked sex would end up spoiling their own health and that of the spouse. They need to be reminded that it's not a wedding of some beasts. That way, animals mate and reproduce only as per Nature's signals in specific seasons. People who marry for carnal pleasure are worse than the beasts. Those who do not care for self-discipline and family-planning destroy the peace, progress, and joy of everyone in the family by producing a crowd of offspring and spend the rest of their lives in repenting or cursing their fate. In want of proper upbringing, their children often adopt wrong paths and become problematic for society as well.

**A flower cannot blossom without sunshine, and man cannot live without love.**

**- Max Muller**

If you have good thoughts, they will shine out of your face like sunbeams, and you will always look lovely. **- Roald Dahl**

I often advise the young couples that they need not necessarily have their own children. If they have the inner urge for selfless service, husband and wife together can join shoulders and devote their joint endeavors for social welfare. But this may not be possible for everyone. In general, people wish to have a child. In today's circumstances, when the world is already facing the risk of population-explosion, the crises of energy and other resources, and exceptional competitions on all fronts of progress, the young married couples should be extra cautious. In my view, only one child should be sufficient. In any case, no responsible parents should have more than two children, irrespective of the gender of the children.

In our (Indian) society, many people have the blind faith that it's only when a son ignites the funeral pyre that the soul of the father/mother would rest in heavenly abode. Most people also have the mindless notion that it's only through a son that the dynasty or family name would survive. Because of this notion, they continue to 'produce' children till they get one or two boys at least. They don't bother to think about how they would raise so many children? And, what great contributions their son(s) would make if they are not even given adequate education, and not provided any guidance/training to realize and groom their talents or augment their potentials?

I want to ask such people — who continued the name and fame of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's family? Wasn't his only daughter, who expanded the reputation of her dynasty? In your case, it's neither you nor your son, who would ever be able to get any name for yourself or your family if you continue to be trapped in the rigid, insane convictions and follow the absurd traditions.

There is yet another class of the so-called 'modern' or 'forward-looking' people, who keep their family small, but do not bother about their responsibilities towards the society; forget the society, they don't even care for their parents. There are some, for whom fulfilling the family responsibilities only mean accumulating more and more comforts and wealth for it; they keep gifting gorgeous saris/dresses and jewelry to the wife and send their children to expensive public schools and remain over-occupied in earning more for this purpose. They also need to be taught the core concept of "family," the philosophy of family-life, and the importance of imbibing it in their thoughts and deeds.

I hope all of you, who have come here for a sādhanā-course on spiritual development, have understood the real meaning and philosophy of family-life and the importance of adopting its core teachings and qualities for spiritual growth.

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(To be continued in the next issue)

If you wish to keep as well as possible, the less you think about your health, the better. - **Oliver Wendell Holmes**

## Walking for Health

Walking is an integral part of our daily life. Though an everyday activity, it can be considered as an exercise. Especially for elderly, sick, or those who are not physically fit for rigorous exercise, walking is a useful and inexpensive alternative. If a person can regularly walk for 30 minutes every day, then the benefits of walking are enormous. It keeps both body and mind healthy and disease-free.

We tend to be indifferent to the benefits of walking and, more often than not, ignore that it offers to maintain a healthy body and mind. Walking directly impacts various parts of our body; firstly, it strengthens the muscles and bones of the legs, and it also exercises the knees. The blood circulation becomes better, the heart and lungs become more robust, the brain gets stimulated, the mind can concentrate better – these are just some of the advantages of walking. These directly result in significant benefits for those suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and poor memory.

Walking as an exercise can be done at any time, but the morning walk is

considered the most beneficial. The atmosphere has more oxygen during the morning, and the surroundings are also filled with positive vibrations. But if you want to walk in the form of an exercise, you can do it whenever you have the time. Thirty minutes is typically considered adequate for walking. If someone is unable to find the time, they can also split the exercise and do it in 10-minute durations too. If you are not in a position to step outside for a walk, you can choose to walk in the corridor or on the terrace. You can use a pedometer or count the steps to keep track of your exercise.

In addition to walking at a regular time every day, there are many other ways in which you can incorporate exercise in your daily life. If your house or office is on a higher floor, then you can avoid the elevator and climb stairs to get the benefit of an exercise. When taking public transport to commute, you can choose to get down at an earlier station and walk the remaining distance. You can choose to walk within the campus instead of taking a vehicle. When running errands to nearby places or buying groceries from shops near home, prefer to walk instead of taking out your car. Another great way is taking a walk with your pets. So, depending on your lifestyle, you can figure out various ways in which you can exercise without taking out time for a dedicated workout.

If you walk at a normal or slow pace, you will be able to reap ordinary benefits. But if you want to walk to attain a specific health goal, like losing weight or improving stamina, you can vary the duration and pace of walking. You can increase the period to more than half an hour and

“ An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day. – Henry David Thoreau ”

move at a faster pace such that you start sweating, and your pulse rate increases.

Walking can be made a tougher exercise by adding constraints like walking on an upward slope or trekking up a mountain, carrying weights in hand or on the back, etc. You can also increase the distance of walking or walk for longer duration at a higher pace. Choose whichever option pushes you constructively to meet your goal.

In order to reap the benefits of walking, one needs to take certain precautions as well. Be sure to do some warm-up exercises before walking. It could be stretching your hands and legs, starting at a slower pace, and gradually increasing it are some excellent methods. Also, after you complete your exercise, ensure that you relax your body using Shavasana or any meditation. Always wear the right kind of shoes for walking, ones which are a good fit and offer a firm grip.

Walking can be made an enjoyable experience. If the walking trail is clean, hygienic, and has natural beauty, then the quality of the exercise increases further. The natural beauty

soothes the eyes and relaxes the mind. With each breath of fresh air, the feeling of vitality strengthens. Taking rhythmic steps coupled with rhythmic breathing in a serene and beautiful atmosphere makes it almost like a spiritual experience. The same walking path evokes different experiences based on the time of stroll – morning, afternoon, or evening. Similarly, the route can feel different during different seasons as well.

Such walks can be made a healthy exercise routine with multi-faceted benefits, all of which can be had without any extra cost. The sooner we adopt this form of exercise as an integral part of our life, the better it would be. This is a health routine that people of all ages and physical abilities can adopt and benefit from. ●●●



### Why walking upstairs is so special?

Walking on streets and trails is superb for health. And so is walking upstairs. ...Researchers in Canada monitored 17 healthy male volunteers with an average age of 64 while they walked, lifted weights, or climbed stairs. Stair climbing was the most demanding. It was twice as taxing as brisk walking on the level and 50% harder than walking up a steep incline or lifting weights. And peak exertion was attained much faster climbing stairs than walking, which is why nearly everyone huffs and puffs going upstairs.

Because stairs are so taxing, only the very young at heart should attempt to charge up long flights. But at a slow, steady pace, stairs can be a health plus for the rest of us. Begin modestly with a flight or two, and then add more as you improve. ....Even at a slow pace, you'll burn calories two to three times faster climbing stairs than walking briskly on the level. The Harvard Alumni Study found that men who average at least eight flights a day enjoy a 33% lower mortality rate than men who are sedentary — and that's even better than the 22% lower death rate men earned by walking 1.3 miles a day.

[Ref: Harvard Health Publishing (Harvard Medical School) – 'Walking: Your Steps to Health']



After a day's walk, everything has twice its usual value.

- George Macauley Trevelyan



## Remove these Misconceptions and Enjoy better Health

**M**isconceptions are always harmful irrespective of which field they may be related to. There are many beliefs and opinions that have become very well entrenched in our thinking, but based on factual analysis, turn out to be meaningless. Because they have been accepted to be right for a long time, they have become an essential part of our nature and thinking.

Some misbeliefs are related to eating habits, which also have a direct impact on our health. For centuries it has been believed that salt is essential in food to maintain good health. It is considered as a useful and essential ingredient of food just as the other nutrients. However, this is far from the truth. New scientific researches have confirmed that salt is not only inessential but also harmful to the body. It is termed as a slow poison and even an impediment in maintaining good health.

Sometime back, a conference of medical experts was organized at Monte Carlo in Monaco. The meeting had focused on finding a lasting solution to the problem of declining human health and on identifying all the factors that

are harmful to it. The conclusions that experts arrived at are very significant. Everyone agreed that artificially cultivated salt is dangerous for health in every way. Only the salt that is naturally present in food items is the most suitable for the human body. The amount of salt that body needs is provided for by nature in ample quantity in foods like green leafy vegetables, and fruits. Other than satiating the craving for taste, there is no other justification for adding any more salt in the diet. The published report of the conference establishes a direct connection between salt and blood pressure (BP). Salt plays a significant role in aggravating blood pressure (BP). Among natural food items as well, the ones with low salt content were found to be more nutritious for the human body.

Forest areas and other unapproachable regions still house many human tribes that are entirely unconnected with modern civilization. Their food does not include salt, and so, they are in a better state of health as well. There are many Afghan and Pakhtoon tribes whose lifestyles are still like that of primitive societies. They also do not add salt to the natural food they eat.

The next misconception regarding food is the nutritional value of various foods we eat. It is believed that the more we eat food, which is rich in protein and fat, the better protected and healthy our body would be. New facts have emerged through research, which show that the quality of food that promotes good health is not in its calories or quantity of proteins but in how digestible is the food and how well it suits the constitution of the person consuming it. Dr. R. N. Chakravarty researched on monkeys in the Indian Council of Medical Research, Delhi, to study the factors that cause high blood

Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food. - **Hippocrates**

pressure and other heart-related diseases. In this study, monkeys were fed with food with excessive proteins and fats, which was against the natural constitution of their digestive system. In a short time, it was found that fats began to deposit in their coronary artery, and they got affected by heart disease. When the food was reverted to what suited them and with low calories, it played a significant role in improving the condition of their arteries. In his supervision, similar research studies were conducted in Chandigarh as well. One hundred twenty-four monkeys were the subjects. The research team fed some of the monkeys with a fat-rich diet for a year. Some monkeys suffered heart attacks. Many developed high BP, and many others also suffered from thrombosis (blood clots).

One of the arguments given in support of the non-vegetarian diet is that its protein content and calories are higher. But the study mentioned above proves that proteins and high calories have nothing to do with good health. Only food grains that suit the human body help in furthering good health. The human digestive system is not designed for non-vegetarian food. Carnivorous animals have a different kind of structure of teeth and intestines, which do not have any resemblance to that of humans. Our digestive system is incapable of digesting the proteins and fats found in meat, fish, and eggs. The fast-rising number of heart diseases is due to the factor that humans have moved away from consuming simple, natural, easily digestible food items and have adopted non-vegetarian diets.

People there have begun to understand the ill effects of eating non-vegetarian food. In fact, a 'Vegetarian Society' has been formed in England, which aggressively campaigns in favor of eating easily digestible food grains, vegetables, and fruits and exposes the harms caused by non-vegetarian food. Their

good efforts have earned much more success than was expected. Thousands of people have forsaken meat and adopted vegetarian food. Their efforts have earned the reputation of causing a health revolution.

David Tilman, Chair of Ecology at the University of Minnesota and his colleagues studied the relative healthiness of 15 types of foods for humans. They looked at how each food group affected overall death risk, as well as the risk of heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes, and stroke. The investigators then calculated the environmental impact of each of those foods, taking into account: (i) the amount of land and water required, (ii) the greenhouse gas emissions involved in the production, (iii) the amount of acidic pollution produced, and (iv) the nutrient runoff from each food. Red meat scored the worst in environmental impact, followed by chicken, eggs, fish, and dairy products. Tilman also said, 'Livestock and chickens also create a lot of manure, which can run off into nearby waters and cause toxic algae blooms'.

Therefore, people who wish to maintain good health must first get rid of these common misconceptions about their food and start eating right.



The first wealth is health. - **Ralph Waldo Emerson**



Gayatri Jayanti Parva was celebrated at Shantikunj, Haridwar in the faith-filled atmosphere (obeying the rules of lockdown)



Glimpses of the enthusiastic participation of Shraddheya Dr. Pranav Pandya and Revered Shail Jiji among other Nature lovers in 'Tree Plantation' on 500<sup>th</sup> consecutive Sunday by Gayatri Pariwar Youth Group, Kolkata

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