

Hope This Meets You — in Good Health —

*The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry
Issue No. 11 / 2005*



Message from the Minister

In a letter to Sukadeva Dasa, in April 1974, Srila Prabhupada wrote: “You write that our society should provide some medical facility, insurance, or personnel to handle devotees who become chronically ill and thus ostracized from our society. Of course, this kind of management of affairs is better handled by the GBC, which I have created for this purpose . . .”

According to a study done by two Harvard researchers, 34 million people in the United States have no medical insurance and thus often do not receive adequate health care. These indigent Americans must sometimes consider even dental treatment a luxury, and thus they suffer the loss of their teeth. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* tells us that the only permanent remedy for the problems of life is to obtain the mercy of the Lord. Still, as long as the soul exists in a material body and has not transcended bodily consciousness, arrangements must be made so that a person can render devotional service with minimal disturbance.

In many countries adequate health care, retirement care, and hospice care are supplied by governments. However, in those countries where the devotees have no such security, ISKCON authorities, who accept the devotees’ voluntary service, have some obligation to see to both the devotees’ spiritual welfare and their mental and physical well-being.

Prahladananda Swami
GBC Minister for Health and Welfare

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Credits

Editors

His Holiness
Prahladananda Swami
Tattvavit Dasa
Rupa Sanatana Dasa
Kancana-valli Devi Dasi

Layout

Yadurani Devi Dasi

Subscriptions

Sivananda Dasa
Bhaktin Linda



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ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry
c/o ISKCON Radhadesh
Château de Petite Somme 5
6940 Septon (Durbuy) , Belgium

Please send all correspondence to this address.

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Quotes from Srila Prabhupada

It is essential that a *brahmacari* engaged in spiritual advancement look very healthy and lustrous.

— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.21.45–47, p.

Real sense enjoyment is possible only when the disease of materialism is removed. In our pure spiritual form, free from all material contamination, real enjoyment of the senses is possible. A patient must regain his health before he can truly enjoy sense pleasure again. Thus the aim of human life should not be to enjoy perverted sense enjoyment but to cure the material disease. Aggravation of the material disease is no sign of knowledge, but a sign of *avidya*, ignorance. For good health, a person should not increase his fever from 105 degrees to 107 degrees but should reduce his temperature to the normal 98.6. That should be the aim of human life. The modern trend of material civilization is to increase the temperature of the feverish material condition, which has reached the point of 107 degrees in the form of atomic energy. Meanwhile, the foolish politicians are crying that at any moment the world may go to hell. That is the result of the advancement of material knowledge and the neglect of the most important part of life, the culture of spiritual knowledge. . . . We must not follow this dangerous path leading to death. On the contrary, we must develop the culture of spiritual knowledge so that we may become completely free from the cruel hands of death.

This does not mean that all activities for the maintenance of the body should be stopped. There is no question of stopping activities, just as there is no question of wiping out one’s temperature altogether

when trying to recover from a disease. “To make the best use of a bad bargain” is the appropriate expression. The culture of spiritual knowledge necessitates the help of the body and mind; therefore maintenance of the body and mind is required if we are to reach our goal. The normal temperature should be maintained at 98.6 degrees, and the great sages and saints of India have attempted to do this by a balanced program of spiritual and material knowledge. They never allow the misuse of human intelligence for diseased sense gratification.

— *Sri Isopanisad*, Mantra 11, purport

Kapha, pitta, and vayu. *Kapha* is mucus; *pitta*, bile; and *vayu*, air. These things are being manufactured. After eating, these three things are being manufactured, and if they are well adjusted, parallel, then the body is healthy, and if there is more or less an imbalance, then there is disease. We have the Ayurveda — *ayur* means “span of life,” and *veda* means “knowledge.” The Vedic knowledge of the span of life is very simple. The doctors do not require a pathological laboratory, a clinic, no. They require to simply study these three elements, *kapha, pitta, vayu*. Their science is to feel the pulse. You know, every one of you, that the pulse is moving: tick, tick, tick, tick. So they know the science of feeling the beating of the pulse. By this they understand the position of these three elements, *kapha, pitta, vayu*. And by that position, they diagnose. In the Ayurveda there are symptoms: the veins are moving like this, the heart is moving like that, then the position is this. As soon as they understand the position, they verify the symptoms. They enquire from the patient, “Do you feel like this?”



Do you feel like this?” If he says, “Yes,” then it is confirmed. They feel how the pulse is beating, and the symptoms are confirmed; then the medicine is readied. Immediately take the medicine.

Formerly every *brahmana* used to learn these two sciences, Ayurveda and *gyotirveda*, astrology, because the *ksatriyas*, the *vaisyas*, and the *sudras* needed the *brahmanas*’ advice for health and the future. Everyone is inquisitive to learn the future, and everyone is concerned with health. So the *brahmanas* would simply advise about health and the future. That was their profession, and people gave them eatables and cloth, so that they had nothing to do with working. Anyway, this body is a bag of the three elements, *yasyatma-buddhih kunape tri-dhatuke* (*Bhag.* 10.84.13). The *Bhagavatam* says, “I am not this body. This is a vehicle.” Just like we ride on a car; so I am not the car. Similarly, this is a *yantra*, a car. Krishna, or God, has given me this car; I wanted it. That is stated in the *Bhagavad-gita*: *isvarah sarva-bhutanam hrd-dese ’rjuna tisthati* (*Bg.* 18.61). “My dear Arjuna, the Lord as Paramatma is sitting in everyone’s heart,” *bhramayan sarva-bhutanam yantrarudhani mayaya*, “and He is giving a chance to the living entity to travel, to wander,” *sarva-bhutanam*, “all over the universe.” I am a soul. I have been given a nice car — it is not a nice car, but as soon as we get a car, however rotten it may be, we think that it is very nice [laughter] and identify with that car. “I have got this car, I have got that car.” One forgets, if one drives a very costly car, that he is a poor man. He thinks “I am this car.” This is bodily identification.

— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lecture,
New Vrindaban, September 5, 1972

TRADITIONAL ETHICS in Ayurveda



WHY should anyone care what the traditional Ayurvedic stance is on ethics? Are we not free to incorporate Ayurveda's beneficial techniques into a modern practice that accommodates Western sensibilities and eschews ancient moral paradigms? Why must we encumber our modern scientific approach to Ayurveda with those ethical imperatives that some label sectarian or Hindu?

A logical rule in Vedic dialectics, known by the colorful name *ardha kukkuti nyaya*, signifies, literally, "half-hen logic," and refers to any effort to take advantage of one aspect of an integral proposition while discarding what is considered inconvenient or burdensome. The name of this logical rule (*nyaya*) refers to a well-known Indian instructive tale of a farmer who cut off a hen's head (the part that eats) and kept only the posterior (the part that yields eggs). Obviously, half a hen (*ardha kukkuti*) is no hen at all and will not produce the expected benefits. The same is true for traditional Vedic sciences, which constitute an integral whole, and whose benefits derive precisely from being an integral whole.

To avoid the half-hen logic, practitioners of Ayurveda must at least accept two basic tenets of Vedic philosophy: the law of karma, and the reality and primacy of the soul. At the risk of political incorrectness or apparent exclusivity, I will assert that those who do not accept these two fundamental Vedic principles are unqualified to study or practice Ayurveda. Such principles are an integral and indivisible characteristic of Vedic science, its very foundation, in fact. Persons who do not accept the Vedic conclusions may do so and are welcome to study and may, with profit, incorporate Ayurvedic techniques into their eclectic practices. They will not, however, be able to understand and practice Ayurveda as it is.

What constitutes evidence in Ayurveda?

The true practice of Ayurveda requires faithful adherence to the principles enunciated in the philosophical system of Vedanta, which is based on the *prasthanaya traya*, the three sources of knowledge, namely *sruti* (*Upanisads*), *smrti* (*Puranas*, including the *Bhagavad-gita*), and *nyaya* (*Vedanta-sutra*). All the schools of Vedanta accept these preeminent texts, even when they may disagree on subtle aspects of interpretation. In these texts, the question of what constitutes proper evidence is squarely addressed.

Vedanta-sutra (2.1.27) firmly establishes what constitutes evidence: "Scripture alone is the root from which we learn about transcendental subjects." Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes in his commentary to *Dasa-mula nirayas*, Verse 1: "The message of the Vedas received through *guru-parampara* [disciplic succession] is called evidence. The Vedas and *smrti-sastra*, such as *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which follow the Vedic version, have been accepted as authoritative proof, as have different types of evidence such as direct perception and logic, inasmuch as they confirm the Vedic version."

Following the Vedic scriptures does not imply that we must accept without question whatever they say. Srila Madhvacarya, a brilliant early commentator on the *Vedanta-sutra*, unambiguously explains the Vedic position: "Although the scrip-

tures, as a rule, enjoy a higher status than perception or logic, they do so only in the absence of conflict with the evidence by which the data are established. If the evidence by which a given datum is established were to be invalidated, the datum itself would cease to exist and no further statements about it could have any force" (*Visnu Tattva Nirnaya* 19b).¹ But following the Vedic scriptures does mean that "In respect of matters vouchsafed exclusively by scripture, *sastra* itself is the evidence by which data are established." (*Anu Vyakhyana*)²

The *prasthanaya traya* say, *acaryavan puruso veda*: "One attains knowledge by instruction from a qualified preceptor" (*Chandogya Upanisad* 6.14.2). In addition, *acaryaddhaiva vidya vidita sadhistham prapat*: "Knowledge obtained from a teacher has the greatest efficiency."³ Both scriptural statements point to the inescapable conclusion that only one who follows the disciplic succession of *acaryas* knows things as they are. The *Bhagavad-gita* confirms: "All purposes served by a small well can at once be served by a great reservoir of water. Similarly, all the purposes of the Vedas can be served to one who knows the purpose behind them" (Bg. 2.46). "Ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain pure consciousness; they fall down. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next" (Bg. 4.40).

Thus, to ascertain Ayurvedic principles, we must turn to the *prasthanaya traya* and literatures in pursuance of the Vedic conclusion to establish "the purpose behind them." By defining the *jiva* (soul), *ayus* (life), and *karma* (action), we can easily address theoretical, practical, and ethical problems from a sound perspective, using logic and perception to supplement our understanding.

Who is the jiva?

In the *Gita* (7.4-5), Lord Krishna says, "Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and ego — these eight comprise My separated material energies. Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities (*jivas*) who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature." Here Sri Krishna establishes a clear distinction between the inferior, material energy — the *panca mahabhuta* (five elemental states of matter), plus the *sukhma sarira* (mind and intelligence) and the *karana sarira* (false ego) — and the *jivas*, who are described as "superior energy." These *jivas* are *cit-kana*, particles of spirit, not matter.

Lord Krishna already said, "Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be. . . . Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the material body there is no endurance and of the eternal soul there is no change. This they have concluded by studying the nature of both." (Bg. 2.12 and 2.16) Srila Madhvacarya summarizes in the *Vishnu*

1 *Visnu Tattva Nirnaya*. In: B.N.K. Sharma, *Madhva's Teachings in His Own Words*, p. 62.

2 *Anu Vyakhyana*. In: B.N.K. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 63; edited for clarity.

3 *Chandogya Upanisad*, quoted in the commentary on verse 8 of *Vivekacudamani* by Sri Sankaracarya Candrasekara Bharati of Sringeri Matha.

Nimai Nitai Dasa

Tattva Nirnaya: “The entity who enjoys the happiness and suffers the ills of life, who is eligible for bondage and release, is the *jiva*.”

What is ayus?

Acharya Charaka has defined *ayus* (life, longevity) as “the conjunction of body, sense organs, mind, and soul” (*Charaka Samhita* 4.1.42). He characterizes the aim of Ayurveda as maintaining harmony among the three bodily humors (*doshas*) that make up one’s constitution, the five elemental states, the seven bodily tissues, the ten faculties of perception, and action, mind, intellect, and soul, or *jiva*.

“On being born, the soul assumes a body and becomes united with all suffering. On dying, he departs from the body and leaves all suffering behind” (*Brhad Aranyaka Upanisad* 4.3.8). “This body verily dies when the *jiva* abandons it, but the *jiva* never dies” (*Chandogya Upanisad* 6.11.3). Sri Krishna elaborates in the *Gita*: “For the soul there is neither birth or death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever existing, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain” (Bg. 2.20).

According to Vedic evidence, then, the soul is the living entity, and the body is its “clothing”; the soul is the experienter, and the body is the instrument of experience. Since Acharya Charaka has defined health as the harmony of body, life force (*prana*), mind, and soul, we must understand that the soul, not the body, is the patient, and must strive to act in the best interests of that *jiva*, harmonizing the body, life force, and mind with the highest aspirations of the soul.

What is karma?

Although a thorough exposition of the doctrine of *karma* is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to estab-

lish in broad strokes that the Vedic understanding is not to be confused with prevailing fads and gross simplifications. The doctrine of *karma* is the scientific application of the law of cause and effect to the field of human activity: every effect is the product of a prior cause, and that effect is in turn the cause of a later effect.

The causes behind the generation of *karma* are identified in the Vedic *sastra* as the five afflictions (*klesas*): nescience (*avidya*), egoism (*asmita*), attachment (*raga*), aversion (*dvesa*), and clinging to physical life (*abhinivesa*). Nescience is defined as forgetfulness of the soul’s constitutional position as a particle of the superior energy (*cit-kana*) of Sri Krishna, the Absolute, leading to subordination of the *jiva* to the inferior energy, or matter. Nescience is the source of all afflictions, and is defined as becoming *bahirmukha* (“extroverted”), or turning away from the Lord. This nescience is *anadi*, beginningless; it is present in the embodied *jiva* since time immemorial.

Nescience gives rise to egoism, described as misidentification of the *jiva* with the subtle and physical bodies, and the desire to exert control over other sentient and insentient beings. Egoism causes the misidentified *jiva* to feel attraction and aversion for those sentient and insentient beings that provide its material senses with pleasure or pain. Finally, the afflictions culminate in clinging to physical life, which is expressed as the will to survive in the current physical form, and intense fear of death. All action, all *karma*, originates from these five afflictions.

The stages in the generation of *karma* are summarily described here in order to understand the mechanics of the doctrine: countless latent subliminal impressions (*samskaras*) are present in the causal body (*karana sarira*) of all living entities as a result of previous *karma* (action). When the environment is suitable for their manifestation, *samskaras* generate desires (*vasanas*). When those desires become compul-

sions, the *jiva* experiences *upadana*, which is defined as the mental effort expended to obtain the object of desire. *Anubhava*, the next stage, entails the actual process of experiencing the objects of desire through the ten senses of perception and action.

Karma generates further *samskaras*, and the cycle is unceasingly repeated. This is the cycle called *samsara*, the continuous and practically endless chain of birth (*janma*), desire for pleasure (*kama*), anger (*krodha*) at frustrated attempts to secure pleasure, the delusion (*moha*) that what has failed to cause permanent pleasure in the past will cause permanent pleasure in the future, action (*karma*) to achieve these pleasures, merit and demerit (*punya* and *papa*) resulting from such activities, aging and decay (*jara*), physical death (*mrtayu*), and rebirth (*janma*).

This cycle of *samsara* is the original disease of the *jiva*, called *bhava-roga*. *Bhava* means “becoming what one is not,” and *roga* means “disease.” *Bhava-roga* is repeated birth and death. *Deha-roga*, the disease of the body (*deha*) is but a symptom of *bhavaroga*. Thus, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has stated that engaging in “extraordinary endeavors to keep body and soul together” is a manifestation of *bhava-roga*, a formidable expression of clinging to physical life.

It is undoubtedly the duty of every Ayurvedic practitioner to protect life and mitigate suffering, but it is imperative to understand whose life we aim to protect and what suffering we must mitigate. Because the *jiva* is the patient, and not his or her body, assisting the soul to extinguish the five afflictions is the real duty of the Ayurvedic practitioner. In the *Caitanya-caritamrta* (*Adi* 10.51) we find the description of the perfect Ayurvedic practitioner, Srila Murari Gupta Mahasaya: *cikitsa karena yare ha-iyā sadaya, deha-roga bhava-roga, dui tara ksaya* — “He mitigated the illness of body and soul simultaneously; that was his perfec-

tion.” Although we may lack the high spiritual qualifications of a perfect soul like Srila Murari Gupta, nevertheless we can guide our practice of Ayurveda by the ethical principles derived from this understanding.

Karma and vikarma

Karma is unavoidable because no embodied soul can exist for a second without engaging in action. There is a specious opinion current among superficial students of Vedic philosophy that the term *karma* refers only to those ignorant actions that produce negative results. In actuality, *karma* refers to any action, regardless of motive or effect. Perfected self-realized beings engaged in their eternal constitutional duty perform unmotivated action for the exclusive pleasure of the Lord. Such activities produce neither merit nor demerit.

However, for the vast majority of *jivas* in the material plane, actions are instigated by desire and are known as *sakama karma*, activities born of desire. The fruit of such activities is either merit or demerit, and both further bind the *jiva* to the cycle of birth and death, either to enjoy the merits or suffer the negative reactions of their acts. Those activities performed with the purpose of fulfilling desires are further classified as required or lawful, optional, and forbidden.

For Ayurvedic preceptors and practitioners, required or lawful activities are those actions enjoined by scripture and tradition for the preservation of health and the mitigation of suffering. These include efforts “to maintain body and soul together with whatever is available with minimum endeavor, according to place and time, by the grace of the Lord” (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 7.14.10, purport).

The ethics of a first-class Ayurvedic practitioner are such that he performs his activities without any desire for material results such as wealth, pleasure, and prestige. In this regard, Acharya Charaka has stated, “He who practices medicine out of compassion for all

creatures rather than for gain or for gratification of the senses surpasses all. . . . Those who for the sake of making a living make a trade of medicine, bargain for a dust-heap, letting go a heap of gold” (*Charaka Samhita*).⁴

Unethical actions transgress religious codes, moral injunctions, and social and professional norms. They include dereliction of duty, infliction of harm, acting on prejudice, sexual or economic exploitation of patients, violation of confidentiality, and other harmful actions prohibited in the scriptures of all traditions. These forbidden activities are also called *vikarma*, action (*karma*) contrary to duty (*dharma*).

Among the *vikarmas* that Ayurvedic practitioners must specifically avoid are those actions termed *ugra karmas*, difficult actions with limited rewards. These acts cause ecological and societal harm through the depletion of natural resources. They contaminate the environment and burden society with disproportionate or excessive cost. Toxic pharmaceuticals, hyper-technological instrumentation, and interventions that require vast expenditures for their preparation, transportation, or administration, obviously constitute *ugra karma*.

In addition, interventions that make the patient overly dependent on professional care-givers through drugs (whether natural or synthetic), aggressive therapies, and assistive devices, or that pollute consciousness, instill false hope, and direct the patient’s attention away from spiritual cultivation are also classified as *ugra karma*. Such actions are never in the best interest of the *jiva*, because at best they postpone the inevitable, and at worst they reinforce nescience and make the patient cling to life, thus perpetuating repeated birth and death.

In the *Bhagavad-gita* (16.9) we read:

⁴ Oath of Initiation. *Charaka Samhita*. In: Menon, A. and H.F. Haberman, Medical History 14 (1970): 295-96.

etam drstim avastabhya nastatmano 'lpa-buddhaya! prabhavanty ugrakarmannah ksayaya jagato 'hitah — “Following false conclusions, those who are lost to themselves and lack intelligence engage in detrimental, ghastly actions (*ugra karma*) that destroy the world.” Identifying the physical body with the patient and trying by extraordinary means to preserve the body constitutes “following false conclusions.” Practitioners who are unaware of the primacy of the soul are “lost to themselves” because they “lack intelligence” to discriminate between what is temporary and what is eternal. Thus, they “engage in detrimental, ghastly actions.” And it is no exaggeration that the current medical system, because of its ever-growing socio-economic cost and the depredation of the environment caused by its over-reliance on hyper-technology and toxic chemicals, threatens to “destroy the world.”

The dutiful Ayurvedic practitioner must resist the temptation to become an agent of nescience by reinforcing the patient’s clinging to life and fear of death. At all times, the enjoined action indicated for ethical practitioners consists of assisting the patient to relinquish the afflictions (*klesas*) and to finally become introverted, facing the Lord.

In a future article, we will explore the application of these ethical principles to various end-of-life situations.

Kaviraja Nimai Nitai Dasa, ND(Ay), MPH, MTh, recently retired from the faculties of the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at Tufts University School of Medicine and the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Boston University School of Public Health. He now directs the Dharma Academy at New Gundica (ISKCON Boston), where he serves as the temple president. He can be contacted at nitaidas@iskconboston.org for information on traditional education in Suddha Ayurveda. He regrets to decline requests for health advice through e-mail, as it is neither prudent nor responsible to diagnose and treat at a distance.

The dutiful Ayurvedic practitioner must resist the temptation to become an agent of nescience by reinforcing the patient’s clinging to life and fear of death.

PRANAYAMA

Prahladananda Swami

Modern societies are full of anxious people moving ever more quickly. We live in Kali-yuga, an age characterized by increasing stress and disturbance. But no matter how frantic their lives, people ultimately want peace and happiness. The Vedic literature says that irregularities in our lives contribute to many of our afflictions, and it offers remedies to relieve our distress and calm our disturbed minds. Like good doctors, the Vedic scriptures give remedies that fit the needs and propensities of the patients.

Of all recommended Vedic remedies, the jewel is *bhakti-yoga*, a yoga based on hearing and chanting transcendental topics and pure sounds, which spiritualizes our lives and makes us devoted to the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. But for those not inclined to such exclusive devotion, the opportunity to remove stress and regain vitality is given through *pranayama*: exercising control (*ayama*) of the life force (*prana*). *Pranayama* is the fourth of eight steps in the *astanga-yoga* system, which destroys ignorance and awakens spiritual

consciousness. Although the eightfold yoga system is not recommended for self-realization in Kali-yuga, two parts of it, namely *asana* and *pranayama*, are helpful in keeping the body healthy and vibrant. The vitality produced by *asana* and *pranayama* can assist in other processes of self-realization, including *bhakti-yoga*.

In a previous age, Dhruva Maharaja, a five-year-old prince, realized the Supreme Lord by intense processes of sense and mind control. His practice included

regular *pranayama*. In the cream of the Vedas, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Dhruva Maharaja is described as following the directions of his guru, Narada Muni. He practiced *astanga-yoga*, and after six months was able to stand on one leg and stop breathing. In this way, he fully concentrated his mind on the Supreme Lord within his heart

Controlling the mind and senses by yoga practice gradually ends our false identification with our gross and subtle material bodies. This world is a distraction for the spirit soul, who is bewildered by the Lord's illusory energy. We misidentify ourselves with our material body, mind, intelligence, and ego and struggle to maintain them, though they are only covering us, like shirts and coats.

Lord Krishna, the attractive object for the devotee engaged in *bhakti-yoga*, is also the center of attraction in *astanga-yoga*. King Dhrtarastra is described in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* as focusing his mind on the Supersoul, Lord Krishna in the heart, and obtaining liberation from material nature by practicing *astanga-yoga*. He took to the process late in his life, but with so much determination that he obtained freedom from the bod-

ily conception of life and left his material body at will. Srila Prabhupada writes (*Bhag.* 1.13.54):

“The preliminary activities of yoga are *asana*, *pranayama*, etc. Maharaja Dhrtarastra was able to attain success in those preliminary actions because he was seated in a sanctified place and was concentrating upon one objective, namely the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Hari). Thus all his senses were being engaged in the service of the Lord. This process directly helps the devotee to get freedom from the contaminations of material nature.”

Formerly, people knew how to fix their minds on the Supreme by doing *asanas* and *pranayama*. In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Srila Prabhupada tells of a *brahmana* in ancient times who after hearing about the glories of serving the Supreme Lord in meditation, began regularly taking a bath in the sacred river Godavari and then concentrating his mind by the process of *pranayama*. By mentally worshipping God (*manasa-puja*) he would perform elaborate service to his Deities, such as bathing, dressing, and feeding Them. Serving Lord Krishna directly and serving Him in the form of an authorita-

tive mental image are both equally spiritual. Thus the *brahmana* reached the perfection of life and eventually was brought to the kingdom of God.

Now, in Ayurveda, *prana* is an essential component of *vata*, one of three major physiological forces in the body. The other two main forces are *pitta* and *kapha*. *Vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* manifest subtly as *prana*, *tejas*, and *ojas*, respectively. *Prana* can be compared to the electrical sparks in the carburetor of a car; *tejas* to the transformation, through combustion, of the fuel into energy; and *ojas* to the fuel.

Prana, an energy different from oxygen or air, is found in abundance in a clean atmosphere, in pure water, and in fresh food. We experience *prana* immediately when we eat a fresh fruit. If we are hungry and chew a ripe apple, we quickly feel a surge of energy in the body and mind. Although the actual physical assimilation of the apple takes place down in the digestive tract, simply chewing it extracts *prana* and enlivens the body and mind.

Prana takes five major and five minor forms within the body. (See the lists below for a description of these different airs and their properties.)

(continued on page 15)

THE FIVE MAJOR VAYUS

PRANA the upward-flowing air, is located principally in the area of the head, throat, and chest. It governs inhalation, swallowing, sneezing, and spitting. This *prana* rules over the other airs within the body. Its movement is generally inward, as it brings external food, water, and air within the body.

UDANA the upward-moving air, is centered within the chest and moves within the throat. This energy aids in memory, strength, and will, and in vocal and other types of expression. It is the air that governs exhalation, and being upward moving it helps us obtain higher states of awareness and consciousness.

SAMANA the air that equalizes, balances different aspects of the inner and outer material body. It is found principally within the small intestine, where it governs digestion and the assimilation of nutrients.

VYANA centered in the heart, is the all-pervading air. It expands outward and allows the arms and legs to function properly.

APANA the downward-flowing air, has its principal location in the colon, between the abdomen and the anus. It governs elimination of urine and stool, sex, and menstruation and childbirth in women. *Apana vayu* also aids in the elimination of toxins within the body and the nourishment of the fetus in the womb.

THE FIVE MINOR VAYUS

DEVADATTA is located in the nostrils and the mouth and governs yawning and sneezing.

KRICARA is located in the throat, governs thirst and hunger, and helps in digestion.

KURMA is located in the eyelids, governs the opening and closing of the eyes, winking, and blinking.

NAGA is located in the mouth. It is responsible for belching and hiccuping.

DHANANJAYA pervades the entire body, causes swelling, and helps in the absorption of food.



Raga Manjari Devi Dasi

Divine Delivery

FOR many couples, having a child is thrust upon them, rather than chosen. Some say that there is never a perfect time to have a child, because fate schedules birth, along with the moment of death. In many cultures, though, parenting is a rite of passage, an opportunity for spiritual growth and deeper relationships; once couples meet the challenge of having a child and accept the adjustments, the blessings outweigh the sacrifices.

Preparing psychologically and physically for birth optimizes the mother's and child's states. Just as a healthy seed bears healthy fruit, similarly, if the sperm and ovum are pure, then the child is likely to inherit a strong constitution. Conversely, if parents are mentally or physically weak at the time of conception, this negatively affects the child.

To give a child the healthiest genetic inheritance, Ayurveda suggests a pre-conception regime called *vajikaranam*. It enables a couple to produce healthy progeny who can assist them in their life's mission. About six months before conception an Ayurvedic doctor prescribes a purification and rejuvenation regime that may include a nutrition plan, herbs, cleansings, yoga, and medi-

tation. The couple avoids pharmaceutical medicine and chemicals in food and health care products. Energizing exercises increase fertility and virility, but they must be done moderately.

To prepare the womb, women can balance their menstrual cycle and take cleansing and fortifying herbs and supplements. Essential fatty acids, calcium, magnesium, folic acid, iron, B12, B6, and zinc are vital to prevent birth defects. Women use female tonics, and men take virilizing herbs. General reproductive, tonic foods include warm unhomogenized milk, ghee, yoghurt, black sesame seeds, *urad* and *mung dahl*, honey, dates, almonds, ginger, and saffron. Hot spices should be avoided. Self-massage and sufficient rest daily charges the body with positive hormones.

Couples who share their fears and expectations about having a child will forge deeper bonds of understanding, which can sustain them through childbearing, delivery, and rearing a child. Couples who attune their desires for parenthood become mentally prepared and less likely to resent the sacrifices and compromises it demands. This is the time to iron out relationship rifts, because a happy couple is more likely to be happy parents who

transmit contented energy to their baby. Spending time together around babies can reinforce the realities and joys of the decision. A way to build excitement is to think of the child's character and envisage a fulfilling future for the family. Though this may not fully manifest, it builds positive expectations that inspire couples to maintain faith and enthusiasm through trials. This shared *sankalpa*, or powerful intention, for a baby generates a powerful attraction for a soul to enter the womb.

A relationship of mutual love and commitment naturally expands into the procreation of a child. The sacred ceremony for impregnation is *garbadhana samskara*. The prime time for procreation is calculated by the woman's ovulation phase. Women with regular menses and an awareness of their cervical mucus changes and their temperature shifts often sense their most fertile time. Or one can buy a pharmacy ovulation test or seek guidance from a natural fertility consultant. An Indian astrologer can advise an auspicious time for conception, called *rtu-samagam*.

Ayurvedic texts warn that it is detrimental to conceive after a heavy meal, within ninety-six hours of the menstrual period,

at dawn or dusk or midnight, on a full moon or new moon night, on fasting days, and when the woman is bleeding. Days after the end of the menses considered fortunate for conception are the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 14th, and 15th days. The Vedas say that conceiving on an odd day will produce a daughter, and on an even day, a son.

Because the couple's consciousness partially determines the type of soul attracted to them and imbues the zygote with its first subtle influence, parents should elevate their consciousness and connect with divine grace by chanting, offerings, or rituals. On this significant day they should feel contented and deeply connected. If either feels thirsty, hungry, fearful, sad, or angry, it is better to wait. After preparing the bed, bathing, dressing in fresh white garments and applying essential oils and flower garlands they can recite prayers and chant mantras in unison. Lord Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gita*, "I am sex life not contrary to religious principles."

The couple can focus on welcoming the child to its new home and on tender feelings for each other. The man then breathes through his right nostril and the woman through her left to optimize the chances for conception chances. The man enters the bed with his right foot first, and the woman joins him by placing her left leg on the bed. Intimacy infused with a blissful abandon will instill the child's initial cells with the same essence of happiness, giving its existence a positive start and a sound foundation for satisfaction. The woman should not lie on her side or kneel during intercourse. Afterward, the woman lies down for thirty minutes and rests her raised legs at a 45-degree angle to optimize chances of conception. To rejuvenate, the couple may bathe and eat sweet rice, saffron, and honey. The woman takes it easy for the next three weeks.

Pregnant Pause

From the first day of conception, a pregnant woman should remain in a happy mood, stay clean, wear ornaments, dress in white, and take part in prayers for peace and good deeds. Pregnancy is a

great transformation. These amazing changes, though natural, can be stressful if mismanaged. The lucky women find themselves thriving with the new life inside them and feel healthier. Serious health conditions can even go into remission, as the body harnesses healing energy to support the baby. Other women may struggle with nausea, acidity, body pain, fatigue, varicosities, and depression. Ayurveda encourages mothers to adopt nurturing daily routines and diets so that they blossom along with their babies. Ayurveda offers effective solutions to common complaints like morning sickness, but these are safest when prescribed by an Ayurvedic consultant.

Everything that affects the mother affects the baby, so she should be around positive influences and avoid detrimental stimuli. Robert Svoboda advises, "Everything you do, see, and hear should be soft, pleasing, and wholesome, to reassure and strengthen the growing baby." The deep connection between the mother and child is called entrainment, a state in which energies resonate in harmony. Hence a contented, healthy mother will send nurturing energy to her child, while a disturbed mother will adversely affect her's. A remarkable study illustrating entrainment showed that an expectant mother in an abusive marriage had a 237% greater risk of giving birth to a psychologically or physically damaged child than a woman in a secure, supportive relationship. This is even a greater risk than smoking or having a severe illness. Other studies showed that a mother with a positive attitude toward her baby and childbearing was more likely to deliver a healthy, well-adjusted child.

When the expectant woman is showered with love this filters through to the baby. Friends and family, especially the father, should offer any assistance and attention she needs, including help with domestic duties, massage, having fun, or allowing her the stress-free solitude she may desire. A woman's brain shrinks during pregnancy, and she is under the influence of fluctuating hormones, so those around her should understand her uncharacteristic mood swings or emo-

tions. To reduce disturbances during pregnancy Ayurveda advises a regime called *garbhini paricharya*. This reduces the risk of miscarriage, harm to the fetus, and toxemia.

Talking sweetly to the baby and playing relaxing music or classical tunes (*ragas*) has been shown to benefit both mother and baby. Hearing is the first sense that the fetus develops. Ten to twelve weeks after conception, any stimulus causes nerve cells in the baby's brain to transmit waves of neural activity. This forms permanent patterns. The stimuli determine which neural synapses are formed and which become dominant, and if connections are not forged at this formative phase, then the baby will not attain its full potential. Thus parents should talk or sing sweetly to the baby, as the neural pathways formed this way will allow the baby to recognize their voices and respond to their touch.

Vedic texts say that we start learning in the womb. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* gives the examples of Prahlad Maharaj, Abhimanyu, and Sukadeva Gosvami. Ontario conductor Boris Brodt knew certain pieces of music unseen, which he later discovered were pieces his cellist mother played while pregnant with him.

Dr T. Mythily, Chief Music Therapist at Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, conducted a study using classical Indian *raga* therapy on two hundred mothers. Her research led her to conclude that music stimulation to the fetus encourages rapid development of the prefrontal lobe, which facilitates easy, efficient learning. "If mothers refrained from playing the music, they reported agitated kicks by the fetuses at these times. And as soon as the music was played, the fetuses calmed down," she said. All the women participating in her study also reported that the music helped them to relax during pregnancy, and they all had normal deliveries.

Numerous studies show that the use of music therapy successfully decreases anxiety, reduces negative expectations, and relieves physical and mental tension in expectant mothers. Music in conjunction with guided imagery or breathing

techniques can be an extremely effective cue for correct breathing, as breathing becomes an almost natural physical response to the rhythm and tempo of the music.

Diet during Pregnancy

The nutrient-rich mother's body ensures the germinating seed optimal nourishment. A well-fed mother provides her fetus all its requirements, while accumulating reserves for breast milk. A pregnant woman should eat cooked, liquid, warm, fresh, organic meals containing all six tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent) in the right proportion. In the latter phase of pregnancy, the stomach is squashed, hence small, frequent meals are usually more digestible. She should not skip meals, fast, or eat on the run or in stressful conditions.

A mother instinctually craves tastes that balance her and the baby. This manifests during the fourth month, when the child's heart develops. It is said that the child's desires are expressed through the mother's cravings, and the baby will be healthy if its desires are fulfilled with moderation.

Healthy alternatives may be substituted for unhealthy foods. For example, sugar cravings can be managed with maple or rice syrup. General additions to the diet include whole grains, butter, ricotta cheese, paneer, ghee, *mung dahl*, blanched almonds, honey, banana, dates, jackfruit, gooseberry, grapes, apples, raisins, fresh vegetables (asparagus, okra, squash), and milk. Milk is strongly advised, but it should be unhomogenized, organic, and boiled with a little ginger, turmeric, and cardamom to reduce mucus.

Foods to avoid include fish, meat, alcohol, carbonated drinks, caffeine, onions, garlic, mushrooms, fermented foods, leftovers, and processed and artificial foods.

Ayurvedic obstetrics recognized the phases of fetal development thousands of years before imaging techniques existed. To support each developmental phase, Ayurvedic doctors prescribed herbs and foods to be taken each month. A monthly milk decoction is made by combining 15

gms of the monthly herb with 200 mls of milk and 800 mls of water, then reducing it to one fourth the quantity by boiling, and drinking it daily before bed.

The monthly therapeutic regimes:

First month

The fetus is stabilized and fed through direct nourishment from blood and digested liquids. Liquid substances (sweet and ripe fruits, coconut water, and milk) are advocated. A traditional practice immediately after conception to ensure a healthy child involves taking 8 fig-leaf buds boiled in milk and strained, for three consecutive mornings on an empty stomach. For the rest of the month, the milk decoction is with *Bala (Sida rhombifolia)*.

Second month

During this time the baby starts to assume a shape with limbs and a head. The milk decoction taken at this time is with *Lakshmana (Ipomeoa sepiaria)*. A tonic jam called *Sonitamrtam* can be started, at a dose of half a teaspoon twice daily throughout the nine months.

Third month

The placenta is established by now and the baby's motor and sensory faculties start to develop. The mother can take more milk with honey and ghee. In Bengal a ceremony after the first trimester (and on the seventh month) is observed at which a woman eats with all her favorite neighborhood children, to maintain her enthusiasm for the child's arrival. The milk decoction is made with the *Solanum melenginum (Bruhati)*.

Fourth month

The mother takes more butter, milk, and solid foods, and mangoes, apples, carrots, and gooseberries. The child's tissues are growing, so the mother's appetite often increases over the second trimester. To help prevent intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR), the milk decoction is made with *Desmodium gangeticum (Shaliparni)*.

Fifth month

Blood, muscles, the mind, and the five senses develop. Ghee, milk, and rice soup is taken along with split *mung dahl* or a preferred protein source. The decoction of milk is made with *Amrita (Tinospora cordifolia)*.

Krishna in the womb of His mother (right), is visited by demigods (next page).

Sixth month

According to the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, at the end of the sixth month the male moves to the right side of the abdomen and the female to the left. The fatty tissue is also formed. The milk decoction is made with *Solanum xanthocarpum (Kantakari)*.

Seventh month

In the seventh month most of the fetal growth is completed, and the skin, hair and nails form. Fat, salt, and water are reduced in the diet from the seventh month onwards. Rice soup with ghee can be a regular, easily digested dish. Small amounts of basil can be taken as an anti-spasmodic. The milk decoction is made with *Hordeum vulgare (Yava)*. *Sukha-prasava* ghee may be given to ease the delivery.

Eighth month

The child is well developed at this stage and the mother must be careful not to overeat, as her digestion is weak and her stomach small. Sour buttermilk is taken as a digestive enzyme stimulant. A small dose of internal oil concentrates (*Dhanwantaram 101* or *Ksheerabala 101*) may be given after dinner to lubricate the reproductive channels in preparation for childbirth. Milk is taken with *Maerua oblongifolia (Morata)*.

Ninth month

In this last crucial stage, lighter food is advised (rice soup with ghee, split mung soup, stewed fruit, and steamed vegetables). An oil enema is sometimes given every ten days to promote a smooth delivery. Daily, a warm herbalized oil is poured all over the body and forehead to relax the nervous system and open and soften the body for delivery. *Thankashree* ghee is sometimes given in the last month of pregnancy to aid complete fetal development and to ensure the pregnancy is a full term normal delivery. The milk decoction is made with *Asparagus racemosus (Shatavari)*.

The perineum is massaged and stretched to prepare for labor and to reduce the risk of tearing. Another way to do this is with the new, clinically tested Epi-No inflatable device. This birth and pelvic floor trainer



is designed to gently stretch and train the perineum for the physical strain of delivery. A Melbourne study found that it reduced the risk of tears and made women more confident about childbirth.

For those who cannot follow all these monthly observances, a simple solution is to take *Sida rhombifolia* with milk before bed and 1 tsp *Mahakalyanaka* ghee before breakfast for the whole pregnancy. These assist the child's physical and mental development and prevent congenital abnormalities.

Labor of Love

Delivery takes on an unexpected life of its own. A pregnant woman expecting the best and prepared for many possibilities will have an empowering and enriching experience. With information and understanding she can take a responsible role in protecting the baby, knowing that her input is vital, while serenely surrendering the outcome to Mother Nature.

Mentally and physically preparing for labor will bolster a mother's confidence and capabilities. It isn't called "labor" for nothing. Labor seems more tolerable, though, if the mother keeps in mind the sweet fruit of her sweaty labor: a cherubic child. Many times I have seen a mother's agony turn into ecstasy as she first beholds her baby.

Ayurveda promotes natural labor, but recognizes caesarean and modern obstetric support where necessary. There are still thousands of expert mid-wives in India, so natural childbirth remains common in villages. But the rate of intervention in cities has risen alarmingly over the past decade. Dr. P.L.T. Girija advocates a return to Ayurveda after witnessing an increase in complications caused by often unnecessary medical interventions. She says, "With minimal resources, and with locally available material, mid-wives provided the optimum

ante- and post-natal care to the mother and prepared her for natural, easy, and painless childbirth. They knew how to manipulate and handle abnormal fetal presentations and to resuscitate and revive the baby when necessary. They performed deliveries leaving the perineum intact and, in most cases, massaged and bathed the mother with medicinal oils and hot water, which reduced her bodily pain, gave her a sense of well-being, and hastened her recovery. They would massage the woman's abdomen and tie up the loose abdominal muscles."

A growing trend in the West is to have mid-wives supervise women throughout their pregnancy, delivery, and post-natal period. Research compiled from fifteen studies highlighted the value of this. Women with continuous care needed less pain relief, less intervention, and were more satisfied with the birth. Another study, by H.M. Klaus and J.H. Kenel, found that having supportive, experienced female help available made labor easier, required 50% fewer caesarians and 40% less use of oxytocin and forceps, reduced labor time by 25% and epidural requests by 60%, and yielded a lower rate of post-partum depression.

Ayurvedic advice on delivery (*prasava kala paricharya*) emphasizes the benefit of the support of an attendant who has many children and is good hearted, hard working, service oriented, experienced in delivery, affectionate, cheerful, and capable of keeping a pregnant woman happy.

Whether the husband is present is an individual choice. Many men wish to be a useful support but are clueless about ways to assist. They can offer enormous help if they learn how beforehand. Most women want their husbands present and see the delivery as a shared duty. To become informed and involved, men can consult a resource called The Pink Kit and many other prenatal courses and books. The

Pink Kit Method (available from www.birthingbetter.com) covers effective communication and methods for managing the mind, breath, and body position.

The delivery room should be easily accessible, hygienic, comfortable, peaceful, gently lit, well ventilated, spacious, and have a bath. Studies prove that women having water births have less pain and fewer epidurals. The positions chosen for each stage of labor will vary according to the position of the baby and the mother's instincts. Squatting and resting on all fours enlists the help of gravity. Ayurveda suggests that "the mother should be gently massaged with warm water on her waist, sides, chest, back, and thighs. As a result of this, the fetus is brought downwards."

Once labor has started, a mother can visualize a smooth delivery. A yantra drawn on a metal plate can help in transporting a mother's focus to her inner power, as she traces it within her mind. Music is a useful distraction from pain and can trigger breathing techniques that relax a mother. A study by Hanser (1983) found that music took mothers' minds off pain and helped them focus better than Lamaze-practiced visual focal point techniques.

Relaxation is crucial to ensure adequate oxygenation throughout the body and to minimize physical and mental fatigue. A tense mother releases more stress hormones, making labor more difficult. Ayurveda recommends sedating, classical *ragas* played at a low volume. Synchronizing the breath with contractions is emphasized by all mid-wives. Frederick Leboyer, author of "Birth Without Violence," advocates breathing deeply into the belly, chanting a Sanskrit mantra on the exhalation, and waiting for the contraction to complete before inhaling. This method of chanting with contractions is consistent with Ayurvedic advice. Leboyer says, "With Sanskrit mantras you

can touch absolute perfection. You need to let the sounds open and awaken within yourself. If women can connect with this level of themselves, the experience of childbirth has another dimension.”

If the cervix is slow to dilate, Ayurveda suggests massaging the area with sesame oil. An herbal enema is given beforehand to promote downward flow and make more space for the baby. Traditional remedies to hasten the delivery include a warm bath with a few drops of clary sage essential oil, inducing vomiting, a decoction of palm sugar with ajwain and milk, and massaging castor oil over the naval.

When the baby’s head appears, the time should be noted, as this is the accurate moment of birth used by jyotish astrologers. Directly after delivery, the child’s respiratory response is triggered by either flicking water on its face, ringing a low-

pitched bell, hitting two stones together near its ear, or fanning it with a natural reed fan. The Western custom is smacking its tender rear. Mucus can be cleared from the baby’s mouth by swabbing it with a corner of unbleached cotton. To wipe the inside of the mouth, use a finger dipped in ghee and fine sea salt.

Wait until the umbilical cord has stopped pulsating to tie it. It can be tied at an eight-fingers length from the belly button, then severed above the tie. The baby may then be placed on the mother’s left breast, where it will be reassured by the mother’s smell and heartbeat. The child is then washed in a purificatory bath and wrapped in pure silk or cotton.

A cotton pad soaked in ghee, *Brahmi* ghee, or *Bala* oil can be dabbed on the baby’s crown fontanel, and kept in place with a hat or tie. (This can be left on dai-

ly for an hour, over six weeks, to help the baby recover from the delivery, to promote brain development, to strengthen the hair, and to prevent cradle cap.) In Kerala, a pre-lacteal food is recommended to provide extra nutrition and boost immunity. There are many tonic combinations, but a common one is a mixture of ghee, honey, powdered gold, *Brahmi*, calamus, and *Clitoria ternata* (*Shankapushpi*). The father administers this on the tongue with a gold object such as a ring, then gives the baby to the mother to suckle first her right breast, then her left.

The author will discuss post-natal pampering and care of the child for the first six months in an article that will appear in the next issue of the magazine. Raga Manjari Devi Dasi is a naturopath, a homeopath, and an Ayurvedic consultant (www.ayurvedaelements.com).



Things TO AVOID during pregnancy

- Constipating, drying foods (e.g., spinach, dried fruit, potatoes, and bitter items).
- Heavy, hot, pungent, or fermented (sour) food.
- Processed, artificial foods, nutmeg, saffron, and ginseng.
- Overeating, irregular eating, fasting, and excesses of any taste.
- Exposure to extreme emotions (anger, excitement, fear, and grief).
- Exposure to pollution and electromagnetic energy, including computer/TV screens.
- Alcohol, drugs, and caffeine.
- Hot baths, deep bodywork, heavy exercise, weights.
- Excessive sun and wind.
- Physical and emotional strain.
- Exposure to sick people or an eclipse.
- Wearing high heels or red clothes.
- Rough, rocky roads and trips.
- Sitting on hard surfaces and squatting.
- Sleeping regularly during the day.
- Suppression of natural urges (such as sneezing or burping).
- Looking down from a great height or into canyons.
- Vomiting therapy and blood letting.
- Sleeping with outstretched limbs (the umbilicus may wrap around the baby’s neck).
- Sex.
- Vitamin A (retinol) and more than 1000 mg. of Vitamin C per day.
- Avoid cat and dog feces, as they can contain a toxin that harms a fetus.
- Some essential oils: angelica, basil, clary sage, clove, cinnamon, cypress, fennel, lemongrass, marjoram, pennyroyal, peppermint, rosemary, sage, and thyme.

Things TO DO during pregnancy

- Sleep before 10 a.m. and rise before 6.30 a.m.
- Do self-massage with warm sesame oil or a herbalized oil.
- Wear loose fitting clothes of natural fibers and comfortable shoes.
- Enjoy at least twenty minutes of fresh air and sunshine daily.
- Practice gentle yoga, pelvic floor exercises, and *pranayama* or Lamaze techniques.
- Practice meditation, pray, or chant.
- Take gentle walks or swims.
- Use calming, cooling sandalwood essential oil.
- Observe personalized dietary guidelines.
- Choose the location of the birth and familiarize yourself with its set up.
- Check childbirth costs and medical insurance entitlements.
- Investigate a good diaper service.
- Read uplifting, enlightening material.
- Regularly bathe in warm water with rose petals and pounded castor leaves.
- Develop a relationship with a mid-wife or obstetrician. (Once in labor it can be hard to absorb new information or make rational decisions. Discuss preferences regarding interventions. Make special requests regarding the environment, support people, birth position, and post-natal baby bonding.)
- Prepare the baby’s space at home, complete with sleeping arrangement, change table, antiseptic hand wash, unbleached cotton diapers, natural talcum powder, etc.
- Choose a friend to breastfeed your baby should something go wrong with you.

Pranayama (continued from page 9)

For the health of the anatomical and physiological bodies, *prana* must circulate properly within the body. Imbalances of the vital airs quickly manifest as disease. *Prana* may move too quickly or too slowly or in the wrong direction, or there may be too little *prana* in the body. For instance, if *apana*, the downward moving air between the navel and anus, moves too slow or in the wrong direction, then we feel constipated. If it moves too fast, diarrhea may occur. Srila Prabhupada writes (*Bhag.* 3.28.11): “. . . the three items *kapha*, *pitta*, and *vayu* (phlegm, bile, and air) maintain the physiological condition of the body. Modern medical science does not accept this physiological process of treatment is based upon these items. Ayurvedic treatment concerns itself with the cause of these three elements, which are mentioned in many places in the *Bhagavatam* as the basic conditions of the body. Here it is recommended that by practicing the breathing process of *pranayama* one can be released from contamination created by the principal physiological elements, by concentrating the mind one can become free from sinful activities, and by withdrawing the senses one can free himself from material association.”

Asanas contribute to the realignment of the gross material body, but *pranayama* especially deals with the proper flow of energies within the physiological body, so that the subtle body is cleansed and rejuvenated. Different kinds of *pranayama* help maintain the normal movement of *prana* and increase it for vitality and concentration. *Prana* is held within the body by the power of *ojas*, the end product of digestion, which manifests from *sukra* (the male reproductive fluid) or *arthava* (the female reproductive fluid). If for some reason, such as excessive sexual activity or disease, *ojas* is diminished, it will be difficult to conserve *prana* and *tejas*. With inadequate *prana*, all the body’s activities will be slower or more erratic. And inadequate *tejas* will diminish the gross and subtle digestive transformations of elements. *Pranayama* works best combined with a suitable environment, life style, and diet.

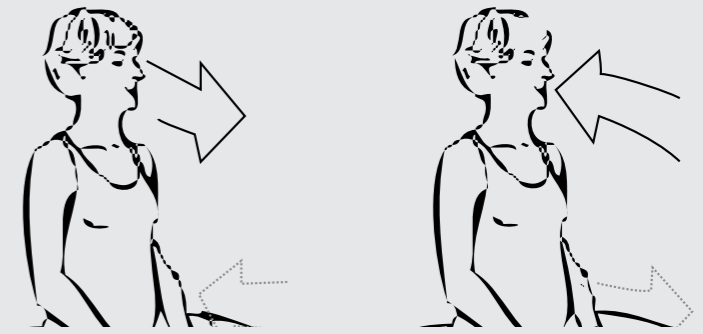
According to Patanjali, the father of yoga, when you can sit in a stable, comfortable position and meditate, you have perfected *asana*. This position is especially important for *pranayama*, which is a subtle activity. However, for those who are not practiced in *asanas*, the introduction to *pranayama* can be on a chair that supports the back or on the floor with a blanket. What follows is a simple practice of *pranayama* that can help calm the mind and increase the flow of energy.

UJJAYI PRANAYAMA Krodhasamani Devi Dasi

Guidelines Best done after *asanas* have prepared the body. Usually properly supervised *asana* practice takes two years. Practice in the early morning or evening, in a room with adequate ventilation, and the stomach and bowels empty.

Caution Do not continue practicing *pranayama* if the lungs become tired or irritated; instead lie down and relax.

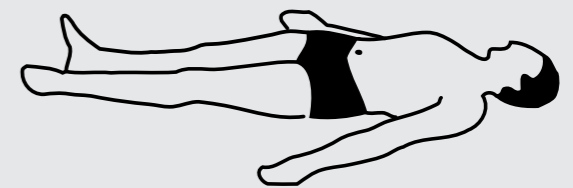
Sit on a chair and for 5 to 10 minutes simply “watch the breath.” The breath will change. It will shift, because you are adding consciousness to your breathing. It is like waiting for a birth. Just as one waits for the birth of a child, similarly the yogis “wait for the birth of the breath.” At this point the senses are drawn inward, toward the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord in the heart.



Prashant Iyengar, the son of B.K.S. Iyengar, said, “The breath is not our own. We should receive the breath like a gift from God. When one receives a gift, he receives it with humility and gratitude. The breath keeps the body and soul together, so it is a great gift from the Lord, and the exhalations always represent surrendering to the Lord within and to His will.”

Take the breath from the pelvic rim, right above the top of the thighs, near the navel, and draw the breath upward from there. Take a long, soft, smooth inhalation, as the breath goes upward (as though you are filling a container with fluid). Softly draw the navel back slightly, toward the spine and upward. Make the side ribs long (as if you are making room for the breath to enter the diaphragm). When the breath has almost reached the top, lift the sternum bone upward like a plateau. Keep the dome shape of the diaphragm, and make a long, soft, smooth, peaceful exhalation. Take regular breaths in between. Take only three Ujjayi breaths, with regular breaths in between, as you do not want to disturb the very delicate nervous system. Notice how your breath is not really like a normal breath: It is thicker and has almost a watery quality to it. That is the *prana* that you are getting in touch with.

After these three Ujjayi breaths, lie down, then move to a classical *savasana*, lying down with the legs, trunk, and head straight, and arms out to the sides of the trunk. There is no lift under the lungs. Simply take *savasana*, let go, and surrender to the Lord within, starting with the release of the nerves. B.K.S. Iyengar’s daughter, Geeta, says, “Release and soften the nerve fibers of the upper inner arms, and release and soften the nerve fibers of the upper inner legs.” Then draw the senses inward, and surrender those senses to the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, situated within.

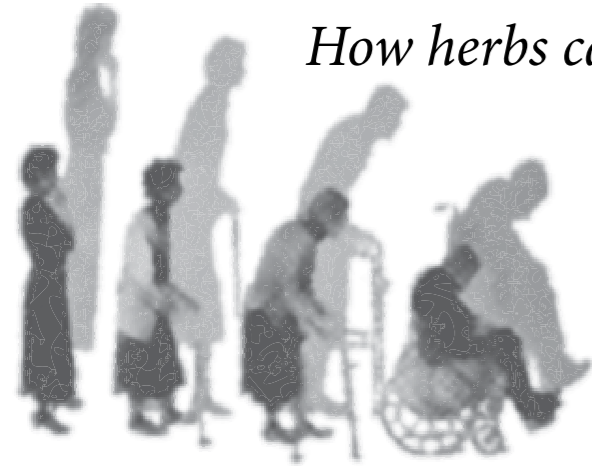


Savasana also teaches us, on the psychological level, how to let go, not only physically but mentally (holding on to grudges, or fears, or anything that prevents us from advancing in our own *sadhana*, or spiritual practice). This is an important pose, as it gives one energy. It teaches one how to draw the *prana* inward, and it allows the brain to rest, and teaches how to let go on the psychological level.

Herbal Help

How herbs can help medical problems

Raga Manjari Dasi and Rama Prasad Dasa
(Part 4; continued from the previous issue, No. 10/2004)



OSTEOPOROSIS

From an Ayurvedic perspective, osteoporosis is a *vata* condition. The bones become porous because of an excess of air and ether and a decrease of earth.

Though this can occur at any age for both males and females, it is most common in women with a *vata* constitution after menopause. Other things that increase the likelihood of osteoporosis include eating disorders, malnutrition, poor digestion, lack of exercise, alcohol, aluminum, cigarettes, carbonated drinks, high salt diets, steroid use, and protein and sugar intake. Prevention is better than cure in any case, as once bone degeneration occurs, it can be difficult to regain vitality in the bones. And meanwhile the body is more vulnerable to fractures and joint diseases. To prevent osteoporosis, Ayurveda guides people to keep their *doshas* in balance by means of an appropriate diet and a *vata*-pacifying regime.

Some herbs facilitate mineral circulation and deposition in the bones, and they can be used: ginger, long pepper, and cinnamon, provided they are suitable for the body type. Phytoestrogenic herbs help post-menopausal women retain minerals. These include red clover, alfalfa, parsley, sage, anise, fennel, sarsaparilla, licorice, false unicorn root, lady's slipper, wild yam, peony, black cohosh, and passionflower. Herbs that are high in natural minerals can also help. Some of these are horsetail and *cissus quadrangularis* (colloquially known as "chain of bones").

The most effective approach is exercise, diet, and oil therapies, discussed in the following section.

Lifestyle changes

The best way to prevent osteoporosis is to do weight-bearing exercise such as brisk walking, yoga, pump classes, or

low impact aerobics for forty minutes, four times a week. The vital time to do this is before age thirty, when the bones continue to gain density. Once osteoporosis has set in, exercise must be gentle at first to prevent fractures. Start with aqua-aerobics before progressing to cycling, then walking.

Regimes to regulate the menstrual cycle should be observed, as women have a higher rate of osteoporosis when they miss periods frequently throughout their lives. Mineral-rich foods should be included in the diet: sesame seeds, figs, mustard greens, turnip, bok choy, kale, broccoli, almonds, brazil nuts, hazelnuts, and prunes. As boron prevents calcium and magnesium loss, foods high in boron assist in osteoporosis prevention. High-boron foods include apples, grapes, pears, peaches, soybeans, molasses, and honey. Fresh fruit, vegetables, and beans rich in vitamins A, D, E, K, and B are also important for bone integrity.

Vegetarians have a lower incidence of osteoporosis, for meat is high in protein and acid, and both promote the excretion of calcium.

Milk and milk products may not be a reliable source of bone calcium, as the calcium/magnesium/phosphorus ratio increases serum calcium, yet decreases bone calcium, via a natural acid-buffering mechanism.

Daily oil massage with calcium-rich sesame oil is essential in preventing or treating osteoporosis. Ayurveda has devised several strengthening herbalized oils for this purpose, using herbs such as *Bala*, ginger, *urad dal*, and goat's milk.

Case study

Lavinia underwent early menopause at age forty-two. Since her bone density was a concern, she was considering taking hormone replacement therapy. Once this is started, however, it cannot be stopped because the bone density can drastically plummet.

So instead, Lavinia decided to go on some estrogenic herbs, such as red clover, black cohosh, and sage. She modified her usually hectic lifestyle by adding daily self-massage, guided relaxation, and a thirty-minute walk daily. Lavinia followed a diet that was high in minerals and vitamins, avoiding caffeine, sugar, salt, carbonated drinks, and excess red meat. She drank plenty of soymilk and licorice tea to keep her hormones balanced.

(continued in the next issue)

HealthDay News

A rewarding spiritual life may help slow the devastation of Alzheimer's disease



"The data suggest that there may be an association, meaning people with higher levels of spirituality and religiosity have a slower progression of Alzheimer's disease," said Dr. Yakir Kaufman, director of neurology services at Sarah Herzog Memorial Hospital in Jerusalem.

Kaufman, who conducted the research while a fellow at the Baycrest Center for Geriatric Care in Toronto, presented the findings at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Neurology, in Miami Beach. Kaufman and his co-authors, however, stressed the need for caution when interpreting the results.

"This is the first study to actually attempt to look into a relationship between spirituality and religiosity and Alzheimer's disease," Kaufman said. "We did not specifically look into the mechanisms, and we certainly need to replicate these results and do a larger study."

Vincent Corso, a former priest who is now manager of spiritual care and bereavement services for Visiting Nurse Service of New York Hospice Care in New York City, said he was not surprised by the findings, however preliminary. "People who are connected with a spiritual presence in their life, whether it takes the shape of a family member, close friend, support network, meditation or yoga, have a sense of peace and probably, by extrapolation, longevity," he said. "What's important to people is how much they are able to connect with the people around them. If that creates a feeling of well-being, then that aids in the healing process."

Other research not related to Alzheimer's disease has started to show a relationship between spirituality and better health out-

comes. "There's a growing body of data showing the positive effects of higher levels of spirituality/religiosity on health outcomes, especially in other disease states," Kaufman said. That data includes studies on other neurological conditions.

For this study, the researchers assessed 68 people who met the criteria for probable Alzheimer's disease. Participants were asked to complete a structured questionnaire which included questions such as how spiritual the participants viewed themselves, how often they attended religious services, and how often they engaged in private religious activity such as prayer, meditation, or Bible study. There were also several true or false items, such as, "In my life, I experience the presence of the divine" and "My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life."

Participants who had high levels of spirituality or religiosity seemed to have a slower progression of cognitive decline. The authors were reluctant to posit any reason for this relationship. "We cannot do speculations based on our study but, in other disease states, there are several factors that may be causing this effect," Kaufman said. "Some could be related to well-being. Some have been related to stress."

Instead of dwelling on possible explanations, Kaufman said he was considering doing another, larger study to try to replicate the results and look into the possible mechanisms.

"The findings of this study need to be replicated before one can start drawing conclusions," said senior study author Dr. Morris Freedman, head of neurology and director of the behavior neurology program at Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care.

Ecstatic Varsana Eye Camp, 2005



Massive efforts went into this year's Eye Camp at Varsana. The organizing committee decided to host 200 volunteers and to operate on 500 cataract patients. Four different places were booked for accommodations, kitchens, wards and operation theaters, and dental services.

From February 16-22, four satellite camps were organized at Kamyavan, Chaumuha, and Radhakund. Massive publicity was done by devotees from Mumbai in 120 villages with the help of Sushil Goswami, from Nandagaon, to bring people to these camps, and 100 patients with cataracts were selected from them.

Radhanath Swami arrived on February 23 and inspired a new

wave of enthusiasm. On Magha Purnima, the anniversary of the appearance of Narottama Dasa Thakur, a fire sacrifice invoked the blessings of Srimati Radharani for the Eye Camp. Before an assembly of 300 people, Radhanath Swami explained the service attitude with which to serve the Brijvasis. He urged the devotees to treat every Brijvasi as their own mother and father and to serve them in the way we worship Deities.

Inspired by his words of wisdom, everybody assembled at Radha-Madhav Ashram to inaugurate the out-patient examinations. Brijvasis had been in the queue since early morning, awaiting examination by eye surgeons from Mumbai. Simultaneously, the dental out-patient department started. Over 3000

patients were examined. Sumptuous *khicari prasadam* was distributed to all the patients and their relatives during the two days of out-patient work.

In total, then, 652 patients were selected for cataract operations, 152 more than planned. All the material needed for the additional patients was procured within 24 hours from Mumbai and transported in 11 trunks to Varsana.

Three operation theatres were prepared, maintaining high standards of sterility, and operations started on February 26 at 6 a.m. Ten eye surgeons worked for sixteen hours a day, with the help of trained nurses and 30 MBBS doctors. Daily, 100–120 patients were admitted to the well-organized ward at Giriraj Bhavan after the operations. Devotees took care of the patients with love and affection. Every morning the patients experienced great joy when the dressings were removed from their eyes and they were able to see. The Brijvasis showered their blessings on everyone. The operation theatres functioned for six days. Patients received *prasadam* three times a day, along with medicines and nursing care. Altogether 601 patients had been operated on at the end of the sixth day.

Every patient was discharged with medicines for 40 days, dark

glasses, a woolen blanket, and a photo of Sri Sri Radha-Gopinatha. Every Brijvasi patient caressed the volunteers and felt great satisfaction.

The kitchen ran for twenty hours a day, supplying *prasadam* to the doctors, volunteers, and patients three times a day. The taste of the Brijvasi *prasadam* cooked by the local caterers was the highlight for everybody.

Teams of devotees from Pune, Belgaum, and Vrindavan temples performed continuous *kirtana* for all eight days, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., invoking the blessings of Srimati Radharani for the success of the surgery.

The doctors and the devotees were taken during their off hours on small *yatras* for *darsana* of holy places in Varsana. This enriched the hearts of everybody with the spiritual zeal to perform their services in Krishna consciousness. After completing the surgery, all 212 volunteers were taken together to Pavan-sarovar, Govind-kunda, Kusumsarovar, and Vrindavan, where they heard divine pastimes of the Lord. We thank everybody who donated for and participated in this amazing service to the Brijvasis at the Varsana Eye Camp.



Herbal Remedies “Do Work”

2004/09/28 © BBC

Scientific tests on a range of traditional remedies have shown they have “real benefits,” researchers say. Experts from King’s College London said that the treatments from around the world had properties which may help treat conditions such as diabetes and cancer. However, complementary medicine experts said full clinical trials would have to be carried out to confirm the treatments’ benefits.

The researchers examined Indian diabetes treatments, Ghanaian wound healing agents, and cancer treatments used in China and Thailand.

One of the plants examined was the curry-leaf tree from India, reputed to have potential benefits in treating diabetes. The researchers found that extracts from the tree appeared to restrict the action of a digestive enzyme called pancreatic alpha-amylase, which is involved in the breakdown of dietary starch to glucose. A patient with diabetes does not produce enough insulin to cope with rapid rises in blood glucose levels. Slowing the rate of starch breakdown, by blocking alpha-amylase, can lead to a more even trickle of glucose into the bloodstream from the intestine.

The researchers are now looking at which compound in the curry-leaf tree has this effect. They say that, once it has been identified, it should be possible to evaluate if it could be better than existing antidiabetic drugs.

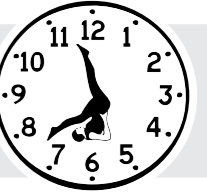
King’s College researchers, working with experts from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana, also looked at plants used by the Ashanti ethnic group. They interviewed traditional healers to identify plants that are used to help wound healing, then tested the plants to see whether there was scientific justification for this use. They found that an extract of the climbing dayflower had both antibacterial and antifungal activity. This would suggest it could help wounds heal and stop them getting infected.

In a third study, researchers from King’s College studied Thai and Chinese plants used as traditional remedies in the treatment of cancer. The researchers carried out lab tests to see how effective they were in inhibiting the growth of cancer cells. They saw “promising activity” against lung cancer cells, particularly in tests of the Thai plant *Ammannia baccifera*, an aquatic weed and the Chinese plant *Illicium verum*, star anise.

Edzard Ernst, professor of complementary medicine at the Peninsula Medical School in Exeter, told BBC News: “This research is very interesting, very promising. We need much more research of this sort. More and more research of this kind is coming out. It is no surprise to those who work in this field. But this type of study can only be the first step in a line of research, and at the end of this line, it is necessary to have good clinical proof that this works.”

The New York Times / September 7, 2004 / Benedict Carey

Working Long Hours? Take a Break, Courtesy of Your Boss



Through the tropics of mid-August, Michael Maccari, a men’s clothing executive, was at it 10 to 12 hours a day. But, at his lunch hour on Wednesday, his deadlines dissolved beneath a gentle tide of deep breathing. Mr. Maccari joined 14 colleagues who were arrayed across the floor of a large conference room, holding the downward-facing-dog position, an upside-down V.

The company, Armani Exchange, offers this yoga and meditation class free to help employees relax, reduce stress, and recharge in mid-week. Similar classes are now familiar in workplaces across the USA. About 20 percent of employers have some kind of stress reduction program in place, surveys find, and corporate spending has helped fuel what is an \$11.7-billion-a-year-and-growing industry.

But as the menu of techniques expands to include massages, tai chi, feng shui and energy dances, the trend has prompted some experts to ask how effective the programs are, and whose interests they serve. They wonder if the effects are lasting or just provide a brief break in an ever-longer day.

Researchers are finding that the benefits of stress reduction programs are generally short-lasting, and may be as useful to a demanding employer as they are to stressed-out workers. All agree that, in part, the courses have sprung up in reaction to the enormous shifts in the nature of work itself, the kaleidoscopic flow of electronic information, the way work obligations have pushed like a climbing vine into almost every corner of private life.

“The sheer diversity of hours people are working is startling,” said Dr. Harriet Presser, a University of Maryland sociologist. “For some people, like dual wage earners with kids,” she added, “the sleep deprivation adds to the stress and it’s like they are never, ever away” from work.

Researchers say that companies’ interest in stress gurus has as much to do with pushing workers as it does with sustained stress reduction. The programs took off in the late 1990s, when workers’ compensation suits claiming damage from stress were on the rise.

“These stress programs were a part of the services that companies were using at that time so that employees didn’t notice how many hours they were working,” said Dr. Peter Cappelli, a professor in Philadelphia.

Mr. Maccari said: “It takes one hour, and your mind is clear, and you approach the rest of the day in a different way.” The downward-facing dog certainly beats jumping like a circus dog for a demanding boss.

Dr. Lawrence Murphy, a psychologist at the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, says studies of workplace stress reduction typically pick up the immediate effect of the technique in question. Massages relieve stress when stress is determined by measuring muscle tightness. Meditation appears psychologically soothing when people are answering questionnaires about how calm they feel after the classes. But the effects are short-lived, said Dr. Murphy, unless people make the technique a part of a regular routine, and ideally combine it with some other activity, like jogging or massage.

For anyone with a spare hour in the day, or who is living comfortably off interest income, this regimen might make sense. But for those whose daily lives demand a mental jujitsu with competing appointments and deadlines, a tai chi class becomes just another appointment.

Time is what most stressed people crave, of course, and this is where

mind-body relaxation techniques can backfire. While a lunchtime course may add quiet space to a workday, it can also prime people to put in longer hours. If your tendency is to be a workaholic, relaxation techniques just enable you to do that. If stress is a warning that you are about to burn out, all you are doing is overriding it.

The one workplace stress-reduction technique that seems to outperform all others in preventing the buildup of stress — rather than reducing symptoms temporarily — is a form of counseling called cognitive therapy. In these classes, people learn to challenge the sort of assumptions about their work (that every assignment must be perfect, for instance, or that they must impress everyone) that unnecessarily amplify the pressure they are already getting from people around them. In 18 studies, including more than 850 people working in a wide variety of jobs, from hospital cleaners to telecom workers, this kind of counseling has significantly reduced work complaints, sometimes in as few as six sessions of training. The counseling has been tested almost exclusively among workers who have some control over their own schedules, like bankers, engineers and other professionals.

When it comes to job stress, control over one’s work may be the most important factor, said Dr. Peter L. Schnall of the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health at the University of California at Irvine. Dr. Schnall and others have shown that the workers most likely to develop high blood pressure are those who work under deadlines with little control over what the workday will bring, like bus drivers or nurses in frantic hospital wards.

“When people have some say over how and when their job is done,” he said, “when they are able to learn new things on the job, when they are able to improve their skills,” they can manage strain.

“Turnover, employee absenteeism, commitment to the organization, pride at work — there’s no good evidence that any of those things are affected,” he said. “If you’re still overworked, still have a supervisor who doesn’t support you, you are going to be unhappy.”

Perhaps the most stressful of all jobs is the one that might soon be gone. In these circumstances, researchers find that what best keeps stress levels in check is telling employees clearly and quickly who is being laid off and why, and offering benefits like help in finding another job, generous severance payments and psychotherapy if needed.

The skeptic’s view of stress management, said Dr. Samuel Culbert, a professor of human resources and organization at the University of California at Los Angeles, is that the programs are a cheap diversion from the real problems, which companies and managers themselves are creating.

“Human resources departments hypothetically have a fabulous role to play in bridging the gap between employees who want to do well at work and managers who want them to do well,” Dr. Culbert said. “But once you hear about stress programs for employees, you have to start wondering whose interest is being represented.”

Certainly, many of those who teach stress-management classes know this story from both sides. Often self-employed and formerly in stressful jobs themselves, they are entirely at the whim of their clients, and their services are among the first to be cut when management changes or times are tough. In this economy, stress managers need stress management, too.

Chant:

HARE KRISHNĀ HARE KRISHNĀ
KRISHNĀ KRISHNĀ HARE HARE
HARE RĀMĀ HARE RĀMĀ
RĀMĀ RĀMĀ HARE HARE

and be happy!

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— in Good Health —*

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