

# **TOTAL HEALTH**

## **Introduction**

This book is a compilation of Health and Heart related topics from our widely read publications by Navajivan Publishing House established by Mahatma Gandhi in 1919. The topics also describe the role of spirituality and regular practice of Shavasana and Meditation in enhancing health and longevity. Similar compilation in Gujarati, titled Swastha Jivan, has received great popularity and a request for such book in English was received from many quarters. We pray this book will meet the expectations of our beloved readers.

I am grateful to Shri Ramesh Sanghavi for lending his skill in compilation. Prof. Narayan Sheth and Shri Nandlal Shah have also been generous in giving editorial touches to compilation. I am also indebted to R.R. Sheth & Co. in taking great interest in our publications.

**Dr. Ramesh I. Kapadia**

MRCP (Cardiology) FRCP (Edin.)

36, Jain Society, Ellis Bridge,  
Ahmedabad – 380006  
Tel: (079) 2657 8025  
E-mail: [rameshkapadia34@gmail.com](mailto:rameshkapadia34@gmail.com)  
www: [universalhealing.org](http://universalhealing.org)

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## Creation of Health

The creation of health is almost synonymous with the creation of connectedness. And connection is yoga. The word yoga originates from the root word *yuj*, meaning to connect. While observing the health parameters of the participants of the Universal Healing Program, we have clearly seen that the sense of connectedness promotes health, and the sense of separation aggravates illness. The mind is the seat of connection or separation. Modern medicine talks about the mind and the body as one entity. They are inseparable. One affects the other. The phrase 'creation of health' gave me a clear picture of what sets free the participants from the fear and anxiety of coronary heart disease. It transforms them into individuals with indomitable inner strength, sparkling with joy and confidence in themselves. Without doubt, this simple technique of stretching and relaxation exercise followed by deep relaxation (Shavasana) and meditation has brought about this transformation. One great lesson that we have learnt is that a sense of separation aggravates the problem while a sense of connectedness creates health. The signs of separation are increased irritability, lack of concentration, fatigue, lack of energy, insomnia, diminished immunity and erratic and diminished heart rate variability (HRV). This is all due to the increased secretion of catecholamines and corticosteroids resulting in sympathetic over-activity and imbalance in 'Yin and Yang'. The signs of connectedness are the feeling of calm and energy, increased immunity, increased and harmonious HRV, and increased vagal tone - all due to the increased secretion of endorphins and opiates in the blood.

It is difficult to calm the agitated mind. It is our common experience that when we are angry, the feeling of anger often lingers for hours. On the other hand, an encounter with one's inner spirit can colour our world for many hours. During this time, nothing disturbs the calm and peace of our mind. What is this spirit? It would have been difficult for me to define it but for our experience in the UHP. The simple stretching and relaxation exercises followed by deep relaxation (Shavasana) and meditation help the individual to experience this spirit which is the life force of everything that exists. In words of our participants, when their whole body from toes to head is relaxed and they are one with their breath, "A great peace enfolds us. We feel whole, safe, secure and loved in these moments of bliss."

*Regular practice of meditation, even for five minutes, three times a day, is an easy way to develop the feeling of connectedness. The whole universe is a saga of connection.*

## CONSCIOUSNESS

This is an era of technology of Consciousness or science of Consciousness. Technology or Science is objective. It is an application of reason and tested knowledge. Consciousness is however subjective, immeasurable, almost indefinable. Science has realized its own limitations. It has reached dead end. In the effort to break this dead end are the seeds of a new science – a Science of Consciousness.

To keep peace and live in accordance with the natural law, we have to develop higher states of consciousness. What is consciousness? Consciousness is the essence of life. It is just like a sap for the tree. Every word that we speak and the act we perform is an impulse of consciousness. The whole universe is the expression of Consciousness.

Shavasana and Meditation are mental techniques to experience the various qualities of Consciousness. It is a world of peace, bliss and happiness. According to Maharshi Patanjali, Yoga is not a therapy, it is a discipline. A discipline is needed even when you are in good health. Yoga Sutra has clearly stated that Shavasana and Meditation should be practiced with devotion, perseverance and regularity.

Basic components of our bodies are the cells. Now biologists have shown that cells can mutate consciously to adapt to the changed circumstances. In industrial accidents, when somebody's thumb has been cut off accidentally, the big toe of the foot is transplanted in place of the thumb. In time, the transplanted toe generally begins to resemble the thumb. It is a relatively common operation. The question is, how do the cells of the toe know that they have moved to the hand? And how do the cells of the transplanted big toe know that they have to grow up to be the cells of the thumb?

Current cancer therapy includes sessions where you are advised to use your imagination to direct your healthy body cells to attack cancer. Medical science is

undergoing a revolution. Therapists do not look at the patient as the body alone, but rather as mind, emotion, body complex linked by an overall guiding Consciousness.

Very simply, Consciousness is awareness of one's self and of others. In a human being both exist. In an animal, there is only awareness of others, not awareness of itself. It is a more limited form of awareness. In plants the awareness is even less. In the crystal it is still less. But nevertheless it is there. Your physical body, mind and intellect are outer layers enveloping your inner Self. You are that Supreme Self. Right now you are not aware of this simple truth. All the time, your attention is upon your body, mind, intellect and their functioning. You identify yourself totally with them. Your identification with these gross components of your personality causes all your sorrows. Shavasana helps you to reach your innermost core and you gain enduring peace and happiness.

“We are both actors and spectators in the great drama of existence,” says Niels Bohr. The Soul is a ‘two-in-one’ – the actor I and the spectator I. The actor I is the I that goes through one's roles in life, the agent, sowing actions and reaping fruits. The spectator I is the pure Self, pure Consciousness, Atman, the silent Observer or the sheer Witness – sakshi cheta kevalo nirgunascha.

Normally we lump the two together, not teasing the actor and the spectator out. The educational and career grooming we go through does not prepare us to differentiate the two. This is our spiritual illiteracy. This spiritual privation strains and spoils relationship, scuttles skills, gifts and faculties, muddles attitudes and behaviours and we end up looking for stress remedies.

Every morning, close your eyes for just one full minute, addressing yourself, detach yourself from the actor I and assume the spectator I. Tell the actor I to go through his/her roles for the day. Assign each role – father, worker – its jobs and instruct it to do things to perfection or as best as possible. Tell the roles that they would be under watch and would be pulled up for shortcomings. At night before going to sleep, sit up addressing yourself for another full minute. Call each role and review its performance for the day. Pull them up for shortcomings and praise them for good performance. Divide the losses and gains, failures and successes amongst the roles, keeping nothing for yourself, and be unburdened and free and go to sleep with a peaceful mind.

## **One Mind**

The Spindrift researchers in America conducted an amazing experiment on vegetation to prove the presence of a Universal Mind.

Mustard seeds were sown in a container of special fertilizer. A string was placed to divide the containers in two parts. Prayers were conducted for one part and the other part was not prayed for. When the seeds sprouted it was seen that the part for which prayer was done had sprouted better. The researchers advanced the research for testing the results of prayer further. The experiment was repeated. The part for which the prayer was done was given a disadvantage by adding salt water in it. But the results were surprising. Prayer was fruitful even when the seeds suffered unfavorable circumstances. This experiment proved that the whole universe has One Mind.

In a dramatic experiment by Paramhansa Yogananda, he asked himself why a rose plant should have thorns. He went to a rose plant near his house and identified his consciousness with that of the plant. He coaxed it not to have thorns and promised that it would be protected. He did this for several days and eventually the plant stopped growing thorns and thorns that were on it dropped off. It never grew new thorns.

## **HARMONY**

The founding father of Medical Science, Hippocrates said about 2500 years ago that our mind is not just in the brain above the shoulders, but it is present in all the cells of the body.

It is difficult to calm the mind. But when we stretch and relax every muscle of the body, the mind gets automatically relaxed and calm. As the mind is present in every cell of the body, this leads to relaxation of the whole body. The experience of mental peace increases the efficacy of any treatment whether it is naturopathy, ayurveda, surgery or allopathic medicines.

Discord in the mind affects body cells. The lifeward processes keeping cells alive and healthy weaken as a result of discord. The strides of progress by medical science during the last few decades for ensuring long healthy life have clearly shown that feelings in the mind influence every function of the cell. Jain Saint Shrimad Rajchandra said a

century ago;’ Why do you revel in feeling of discord which is a slow march toward death.’

Harmony means experience of bliss in the depth of our heart and feelings. A feeling of anger causes discord. This distances us from our original element. In such situations we should somehow pacify our mind, remember a past happy event, experience happiness in the mind and leave the solution of the discord to the power of our original element, with faith in happy outcome. This amounts to faith in Ramanama or the supreme power.

## **Law of Attraction**

A mighty wonderful law of attraction prevails in nature. According to this law, the way we feel is the way we attract. This means; things take shape in our life according to our inner world of thoughts and feelings.

Forces get drawn from the whole universe to create such happenings. All our successes, failures and troubles depend on our inner feelings. We should be careful every moment to watch whether our thoughts and feelings are of indifference and despair, or have happy high vibrations of joy and hope. At every moment in our life our mood is either joyous (up-mode) or despairing (victim mode). Often we are in a mood which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant (flat mode). If we wish to make the coming moments in life successful, we should somehow harbor feeling of joy and bliss.

Whenever we face an undesirable situation, we should avoid frantic attempts to fix the solutions. Instead, recollect some past happy event, develop feelings of joy and be happy. We should then experience the joy that we would get if things happen as we wish. If we experience such joy for 16-20 second three or four times a day, the law of attraction will increase the probability of realizing our wishes. This rule should be followed with patience and deep faith. However, our desire or expectation should not contradict natural laws.

## **Change and Stress**

Life is in a constant flux, continually changing. Life without change is hard to imagine. Every moment the cells of our body are continually changing; the old ones die

and the new ones replace them almost instantaneously. We welcome most of the changes as we grow from boyhood to youth and then into adulthood. There are a number of changes which cause stress, e.g. failure in studies, death of a parent or a dear one, prolonged illness of a member of the family, a serious accident, financial crisis, etc. All the changes have their effect upon the coronary circulation. It is now acknowledged that the effect of any stress depends upon its perception by the individual. In other words, what a person makes of that situation is important.

A very meaningful quotation of the world-famous physicist, Dr. David Bohm, is “Meaning is Being”. Our existence depends upon how we interpret various incidents that happen in our day to day life.

In the days of Newton and Descartes the body and the mind were considered distinctly separate. The end of the 19th century saw the rise of psychosomatic medicine, and we started to realize that the mind and the body are intimately connected with each other. That the mind can effect great changes in the body was proved by the development of biofeedback and auto-suggestions therapy in many diseases. Now with the development of science, the role of consciousness affecting not only the individual body but also everything that exists in the universe has come to light. The mind is now not viewed as something present in the brain only but it pervades in all the cells of the body and beyond.

## **ISOLATION**

Isolation should be clearly understood. Solitude is not isolation. A person can experience union with the whole universe when he is alone. And he may feel isolated even in the midst of family, companions and friends. It is a sense of aloofness, an acute feeling that a person is left all alone in almost all situations that matter to him or have a meaning for his existence.

We are all separate individuals but have a single Source of origin. The qualities of the Source are love, compassion and harmony. We are limited in time and space. We are impermanent. The Source which unites us all is eternal. The extent to which the manifest form is separated from the Source results in isolation and impairs health. When the



manifest form experiences the Source, isolation disappears. One experiences a sense of oneness and healing follows.

The causes of isolation are numerous and complex. In modern times isolation creeps in from all directions. Isolation breeds indifference, anger, selfishness and contemptuous criticism. These attributes are poison for coronary heart disease. The arteries tend to shrink, blood platelets get stickier and blood becomes thicker. Stimulation of the sympathetic system may cause rapid and irregular heartbeats. Isolation may also lead to skin ailments like eczema and psoriasis. The first step in removal of isolation is to recognize it. Extreme success or failure may make a person isolated. Isolation leads to psychological and physical exhaustion. Insomnia and irritability are also symptoms of isolation.

Let us look at a patient's response in relation to isolation. He said, 'Doctor, I observed on the first day of the UHP that I found a talisman. Being moderate in eating habits I was of normal weight, had no addictions, no diabetes or high blood pressure, no family history of heart disease and had normal cholesterol. Yet, I had a heart attack. Nobody could explain this to me. But when you explained the role of hostility, self-centeredness, and cynicism, it enlightened me and I could see, I was stubborn, I thought that I was always right and insisted on my family and colleagues to behave accordingly. I inadvertently harmed myself.'

We noticed in number of participants of the UHP, that stretching and relaxation exercises, Shavasana, Meditation and group discussions heal isolation and foster the sense of oneness. This experience is difficult to describe in words.

## **EGO**

Dr. Dean Ornish's experience with a patient is revealing. The patient was advised bypass surgery after a heart attack. His angiography showed several blockages. He joined Dr. Ornish's program but was getting fewer benefits than other patients. He asked Dr. Ornish, 'Dean, I follow the program regime regularly. I also provide financial help to poor patients in the hospital. Why do I still suffer from angina?' Dean listened to him and said, 'keep on with what you are doing. But don't feel proud about the help you offer to others. Thank God for enabling you to help others and thank the beneficiaries for

receiving your help.’ The patient understood the meaning of Dean’s advice and followed it. His angina vanished in six weeks.

## **BIOFEEDBACK**

Stress reduction and healing have received great support from a new technology known as Biofeedback. It is a technology that helps a person to achieve voluntary control over normally unconscious bodily functions like heart rate, body temperature, muscle tension, blood pressure, brain wave activity and others. Brain wave rhythms have been grouped into four major categories: Alpha, Beta, Theta and Delta. Alpha was the first brain wave discovered and it is Alpha which is presently causing a lot of stir. About seven to fourteen cycles per second are called Alpha, fourteen cycles per second and higher are known as Beta waves, four to seven per second are Theta and four and below four per second are called Delta. It is now recognized that increased alpha production accompanies the practice of meditation. When a person is in alpha state, rejuvenating and self-healing processes are accelerated. During alpha state, a person becomes more receptive to suggestions. This susceptibility to suggestions during alpha state has some startling implications. When the person is in Alpha state, all his self healing ability and the ability to heal others is enhanced. Spiritual healers from all over the world, while they are engaged in healing, produce large quantity of alpha waves at ten cycles per second in their brain.

The simple technique of meditation taught in our program brings about alpha activity in the participant very easily and effectively.

## **Present Moment**

The present moment is of vital importance in creation of health.

Life is not last year, or ten minutes from now; it is NOW, this very moment. The past is unalterable; the future is beyond our control. All we have is NOW. When one lives fully in each moment one opens oneself to beauties that might otherwise escape one entirely.

The surest way to bring on a negative mood is to deny the present, either by dwelling in the past or by fantasizing about the future. The more fully we can bring all of ourselves to each moment, the more our capacity is available for living.

The present moment is to be accepted, as it is the result of myriad of forces that have occurred in the past. The quality of the next moment to be born is largely dependent upon thoughts, words and actions in the present moment. Thoughts come first. If you speak differently from what you think, the following moment will be the result of your thoughts, not your words, and the action will have to reflect your words; otherwise howsoever good your words may be the next moment will be according to your action and not your words. You have to walk your talk. These observations are the outcome of the results seen in hundreds of coronary heart patients who have practiced the Universal Healing Program for more than twenty years. We have arrived at this conclusion after experiencing the calming and healthful effects of Shavasana and Meditation in all our participants of the UHP. The stretching and relaxation exercises done with awareness on the stretching and relaxation process unite the mind and body in the present moment. That is yoga- that is meditation.

The quality of the present moment can be ascertained with the awareness of the quality of breathing during that moment. With practice of Shavasana and Meditation, one can easily know the state of one's mind. With consistent effort, one can alter the thought and state of mind by abdominal breathing.

I will look to the moment, and miraculously, the future will take care of itself.

## **HEALING SYSTEM**

Over the years, the medical science has identified the various primary systems of the human body; circulatory system, digestive system, endocrine system, nervous system, autonomic nervous system and the immune system. Two other systems crucial for the proper functioning of the human body are frequently overlooked. They are the Healing system and the Belief system. They work hand in hand. The Healing system is the way the body mobilizes its resources to get well. The Belief system is often the activator of the Healing system. One's confidence or lack of it in the process of recovery from serious illness affects the chemistry of the body. The Belief system, it must be clarified, is no

substitute for competent medical attention for serious illness, or vice versa. Indeed, both are essential. The Belief system is not just a state of mind. It is a prime physiological reality. The greatest force in the human body is the natural drive of the body to heal itself, but that force is not independent of the belief system which can translate expectations into physiological change. Everything, therefore, begins with belief. What we believe is the most powerful option of all. The main function of a doctor is to engage to the fullest, the patient's own ability to heal, by strengthening his belief system. About half of the people who have heart attacks never make it to the hospital. An important contributing reason is that panic that accompanies the attack constricts blood vessels and imposes an additional and sometimes intolerable burden on the heart. Panic thus adds acute stress to the existing disease. It creates an environment conducive to illness and antagonistic to treatment. No responsible physician would purvey panic, whatever his obligation to the truth. A responsible physician is the one who awakens the patient's will to live. The treatment of the patient would doubtless be incomplete if it is confined to the diagnosis and administration of medicines or the other procedures. Indeed, it becomes complete only when the patient's own resources and capacities are fully engaged. Medicines are not always necessary; but belief in recovery always is. It is perversion of rationalism to argue that words like 'hope', 'faith', 'love' and 'grace' are without physiological significance. Indeed, the benevolent emotions are necessary not just because they are pleasant but because they are also regenerative. In fact, science supports the relevance of these traits and that too with empirical tests.

## **A Doctor's role - Human approach to treatment**

Hippocrates stated that the human body has the natural capacity to heal itself. A doctor's role is to accelerate this natural process. Hippocrates added that a doctor should take all care to ensure that his treatment including his behavior, language or gestures does not harm the natural healing process.

Treatment of patient is the only source of livelihood for the doctor. Every doctor strives to achieve success in his practice. Success implies patient's recovery from an illness and adequate earning for the doctor. In this equation the doctor has a superior

position to that of the patient regardless of the patient's power or wealth. According to the law of Nature, a person at a higher level is expected to show compassion and love for one at a lower level. This is the basis of eternal justice. If a doctor follows this principle while treating his patients, the patients will recover faster and the doctor will achieve success in his professional aspirations.

The work of Florence Nightingale is a historical record written in letters of gold that love and compassion heals. In hundreds of wars in history, injured soldiers were treated and nursed according to the code of war. But Nightingale's humanistic and loving approach yielded wonderful results. Soldiers' wounds healed quickly. They suffered less pain. New hopes replaced despair. Fatalities among the soldiers were reduced and they could leave the hospital sooner due to quicker recovery. All this happened at a time of limited resources; most of the modern medicines were not invented and doctors were in limited numbers.

What is the most painful aspect of modern medical practice? It is not whether most physicians are up to date in their knowledge or in their techniques, but whether too many of them know more about the disease than about the person in whom the disease exists. The overriding issue before medicine today is one not of proficiency but of humanity

### **Conditions for successful treatment**

A leading cardiologist from the Harvard School of Medicine went to Dharmshala to study the benefits of Meditation.

During his visit, Dalai Lama explained to him the three main tenets of Tibetan Medicine for healing of any illness.

The doctor's faith in himself that he will be able to cure the illness

The patient's confidence in the doctor that he will cure him

The doctor's KARMA; his proficiency and its application with compassion and love for the patient.

## **Charak and Hippocrates**

Charak, the sage physician of ancient India, about 5000 years ago, enunciated in immortal two lines the necessary attributes of man to remain healthy. He said:

*“He alone can remain healthy who takes regulated diet and exercise, who deliberates all his actions, who controls his sensual pleasures, who is generous, just, truthful and forgiving and who can get along with his kinsmen.”*

To begin with, one should take a balanced diet and regularly do moderate exercise. This is simple and universally accepted. However, Charak observed, one should deliberate all one’s actions, that means, one does every act with utmost care not to offend others and at the same time be honest to oneself. He further says, one should control one’s sensual pleasures. This is sound common sense. But in the second line he says that the person, in order to be healthy, must be generous. This condition for being healthy is outside the pale of the conventional medicine. Charak does not stop here. He adds, an individual should be just to be healthy. He should have a clear perception of what is right and what is wrong. Furthermore, the person should be honest and above all, in order to be healthy, must be forgiving and be able to get along with his kinsmen. In his final analysis Charak emphasizes the spiritual qualities of a man to nurture health.

Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, says that the healing power is inherent in the body. When disease occurs, the body makes every effort to regain ease, that is health. A good doctor strengthens this innate healing power. Hippocrates also observes that the doctor, while treating his patient, should remember his first duty, *Primum Non Nocere*. In other words, he may not always be able to help the patient, but his prime concern ought to be that he does no harm to the patient. He puts a great accent on the doctor-patient relationship. He was amongst the first thinkers who thought that the mind and the body are one. He stated that the mind is not confined merely to the brain; it is present in every cell of the body. These ideas of the two great ancient physicians, who were also seers, are now proved to be valid in the modern scientific laboratories.

## **Prevention of recurrence after angioplasty or bypass surgery**

In management of coronary heart disease angioplasty and bypass surgery are not curative measures.

Following guidelines will help to prevent recurrence.

- **Weight:** Watch your weight. Even a 3 kg weight gain increases the risk of recurrence.
- **Blood pressure:** Consistently elevated blood pressure of more than 140/90 increases the risk
- **Diabetes:** PPBS should be kept below 160 mg% by regular check up with a glucometer. Glucometers are now available at affordable prices with life time warranties. Glycosylated Haemoglobin should be checked every six months and maintained between 6 and 7.
- **Cholesterol:** It should be checked every six months. The ratio of total cholesterol to HDL cholesterol should be below 4. LDL cholesterol should be below 80. In Asians and people with a strong family history of coronary heart disease, LDL cholesterol should be kept below 60. In diabetics, LDL cholesterol should be kept as low as feasible. A ratio of LDL to HDL below 2 is highly desirable.
- **Triglycerides:** High triglycerides are a trait in Asians. They are usually high in patients with uncontrolled diabetes. Triglycerides are not very harmful if the total cholesterol and HDL cholesterol ratio is below 4, LDL cholesterol is below 60 and the LDL / HDL ratio is below 2. Control of intake of simple carbohydrate in diet reduces triglycerides. At the time of writing this, Atorvastatin is by far most effective and safe treatment in lowering LDL Cholesterol. It usually lowers triglycerides as well. Triglyceride lowering medications are not always safe and may not be combined with statin therapy.
- **Exercise:** Regular exercise of walking on a level surface for 40 minutes at normal pace is recommended.
- **Tobacco:** Tobacco in any form increases the chance of recurrence significantly.

### **Further note on Health**

We have studied the emotions that damage or poison the heart. We have seen how these emotions change the caliber of the coronary arteries, increase the stickiness of the

blood cells (platelets) and viscosity of blood, decrease good cholesterol (HDL) and increase bad cholesterol (LDL) in blood. The total effect may aggravate angina or result in a heart attack. An antidote to these heart toxins lies in the simple yogic disciplines: abdominal breathing, *Shavasana* and meditation. We call these disciplines yogic, because they connect the individual to his large Self. They help him to realize his inner strength, his soul force and his real identity. As adults, we breathe with chest muscles, however, when we practice breathing with abdominal muscles it at once calms the mind. Breathing is central to all the three yogic disciplines. *Patanjali Yogashastra* intuitively observes that control of breathing controls the restless mind, which in turn controls the circulation. Normally our breathing is involuntary and reflects the state of our mind. If our mind is not at peace, the breathing is rapid and shallow and when the mind is at peace as during deep sleep the breathing is slow, rhythmic and abdominal. So, if we consciously breathe slowly, rhythmically, and abdominally, the mind automatically becomes calm. *Shavasana* is a technique to relax the body which leads to relaxation of the mind. During meditation, one becomes one with the breath, one with the life-force, and this brings about an experience of the soul-force within oneself. The realization of the soul force brings forth the qualities of the soul. They are love, compassion, brotherhood and freedom from the fear of death. It is easy to see that when these qualities develop all the healthful changes occur in the body.

Doctors and their trained personnel can easily teach these techniques in their clinics. Undue strictness while teaching makes them less effective. A humble attitude of the teacher and a flexible approach bring about good results. The healer ought to heal himself.

## **Universal Healing Program (UHP)**

The conventional treatment of coronary artery disease (CAD) is aimed at modifying the risk factors (hypertension, diabetes, and high-risk lipid profile), decreasing the frequency of angina, preventing sudden cardiac death and preserving left ventricular function. However, this approach does not take into account the assessment of the patient's inner strength. Inner strength can be determined by a person's ability to make



lifestyle changes and cope better with stressful situations. The issue is to empower patients to make appropriate lifestyle changes.

The key issue in the rising incidence of coronary heart disease appears to be imbalance in the autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic tone being much higher than the parasympathetic tone. This imbalance can be corrected with the regular practice of Shavasana and Meditation.

Universal Healing Program is In-depth Stress Management to Increase Spiritual Strength (ISMIS). Along with conventional management it helps to deal with the patient as a whole - mind, body and spirit. It is a holistic approach to make the patient an active participant in the control, reversal and cure of his/her coronary artery disease.

Inspired by the favourable results of Dr. Dean Ornish's program, we launched a similar program in Ahmedabad on October 2, 1991, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

In addition to mainstream medical approach, the program consists of

- \* Diet counselling
- \* Moderate exercise like walking on a level surface for 30 to 40 minutes
- \* Stretching and relaxation exercises leading to progressive deep relaxation, i.e. Shavasana.
- \* Meditation and visual imagery
- \* Group discussion, with emphasis on the sharing of feelings.

## **SERENDEPITY (ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERY)**

While practicing the Universal Healing Program, it dawned on us that it not only healed the coronary arteries, but healed the individual as a whole. It reduced anger and hostility in the participants and created a feeling of oneness amongst them. The simple light and stretching exercises were performed with an instruction that during these exercises, the awareness should be kept on to the muscle groups which are being stretched and relaxed. As we all know that during 16 hours of waking time, our awareness is in the present moment hardly for one and half hours. Rest of the time, while we are engaged in one task, our mind is wandering somewhere else. The simple

instruction of bringing the awareness gently to the action being performed that is remaining in the present moment brings about all the beneficial effects.

When the whole body is relaxed in progressive deep relaxation and the awareness is brought to the natural process of breathing, the participants experience their Inner Self. During Shavasana when the whole body, our outer form, is relaxed, the mind automatically relaxes and becomes calm. This occurs as the mind is present in every cell of our body, not only in our head.

The experience of oneness gained during practice of Shavasana and Meditation for about 7 to 10 minutes, alters the reaction of individuals for about four hours. The reaction of the individual becomes much less hostile, in fact more friendly and brotherly.

*Feeling of oneness experienced during Shavasana and Meditation created a background for healing. The feeling of oneness and harmony was a great rejuvenating stimulus for the cells of the body.*

Regular practice of Shavasana & Meditation resulted in awakened doing in the participants. With experience we have found there are three ways of awakened doing. First one is acceptance. Acceptance means for now this moment requires me to do this and so I do it willingly. Performing an action in a state of acceptance means you are at peace while you do it. Acceptance is not a passive state; it is in reality active and creative because it brings some thing entirely new into this world. The other way of doing any action is to enjoy doing it. Enjoyment is a second way of awakened doing. Enjoyment will be the motivating power behind people's action. Through enjoyment, you link yourself with your Inner Form. Our Inner Form is one with the universal creative power itself. As you all know our existence has two forms. Outer form of our mind and body which is visible to all of us and inner form which is invisible, which is not limited in space and time and which creates life and time. Our outer form is separate for all of us. Our inner form is one. Up till now in the stage of evaluation on our planet, the inner form lost its consciousness in the outer form and identified itself with the outer form resulting in suffering in spite of all the technological advances made by the enormous progress of the achievements of the human brain. Human brain is a highly differentiated form containing approximately one hundred billion nerve cells about the same number as stars in our galaxy. However, one should remember that the brain is the outer form, it does not

create Consciousness. The Consciousness has created the brain, which is the most complex physical form on earth for the expression of our inner form. When the faculties of our brain are used in all our activities with complete awareness that qualities of our inner form are flowing into our actions then the new humanity will emerge on this planet. This requires an awakened doing at all the moments in our life. While practicing this program, which was meant to be primarily for healing of coronary arteries, accidentally, we have discovered a potential in the program through its regular practice, to help bring about the emergence of an awakened human kind.

## **ABDOMINAL BREATHING**

Abdominal breathing is one of the simplest yet most powerful stress management techniques. Your diaphragm is a large muscle which is located between your chest and abdomen. When you breathe in, diaphragm moves down and your abdomen swells up; when you breathe out the diaphragm moves up and abdomen moves in. A new born child breathes with the abdomen. As the child gets older, breathing becomes partially inter-costal (i.e. chest breathing). During adult life most of us breathe only through the chest. Abdominal breathing is almost forgotten. So much so that when the person tries to inhale, his chest expands but the abdomen moves in, which is incorrect. It makes the breathing process less effective. Lower lobes of the lungs are perfused with greater amount of blood than the upper and middle lobes. By abdominal breathing lower lobes get properly ventilated. This is the physical advantage of abdominal breathing. But there is more to abdominal breathing than the simple physical advantage. It has been noted that during sleep and relaxed state the breathing automatically becomes abdominal. During the anxiety state, breathing becomes rapid and is fully inter-costal. When the individual purposely breathes slowly and deeply through the abdomen the effect of stress on the body is reduced. This is borne out by a favourable change in the brain wave pattern (alpha) during slow abdominal breathing.

The abdominal breathing now enjoys a prominent position in stress management. In adult life breathing is largely thoracic and at times abdominal. An infant breathes only abdominally. Of late the advantages of abdominal breathing have been understood very

clearly. It immediately calms the sympathetic system and activates para-sympathetic system, reducing the heart rate, systolic blood pressure, oxygen requirement of the heart and the viscosity of blood. The abdominal breathing requires some practice. However, it is very simple and easy to practice in almost any situation. Once the technique is mastered, one may practice it daily, at least 3-4 times a day, for 10-15 breaths each time. The benefits derived from abdominal breathing may diminish if you are not regular in your practice. The effect of this yogic exercise is also dose-related. We call it 'Yogic Exercise' because it is a very useful tool for getting mental and physical relaxation. When an individual practices Shavasana and Meditation, breathing automatically becomes abdominal and mind becomes quieter with the abdominal breathing. The peace of mind that follows has a great power to heal. Healing occurs, following the production of alpha activity in the brain and secretion of endorphins and health giving immunoglobins. Above all an individual experiences oneness with his inner-Self. This connects him with the wide world. Our participants who have regularly practiced Shavasana, meditation and abdominal breathing have experienced a great sense of empowerment in their daily activities. Some have admitted to have gained greater control over their temper. Some have observed that they were able to control their taste for fried foods and sweets without feeling deprived of them. They experienced great power over their life through this yogic practice.

## **DEEP BREATHING**

Deep breathing prevents harmful reactions to stress. If you practice deep breathing for a few minutes each day, you will find that events do not upset you as much as before. Also, whenever you feel upset taking few slow deep breaths can help break stress cycle and clam you down. Even when you can not control the situation, you can always control your breathing and thus change your reactions to those circumstances.

**Technique:** Exhale completely through your nose. Place your right hand on your chest and left hand on your abdomen. Then begin to inhale by filling your abdominal area with air. As you do this, your left hand alone should begin to rise and your right hand remains still. After filling your abdomen with air, keep inhaling, filling your lower part of

chest, this should now cause your right hand to rise. Your chest expands as you inhale. Keep inhaling and feel the air rising even higher in your chest. As the air reaches the top of lungs, you will feel your collar bones begin to rise. At this point, be careful not to draw your abdomen inward.

To exhale, repeat the same process in reverse, i.e. from the top to the bottom. Feel your collar bones lowering as you empty the top of your lungs. Continue exhaling as you feel the upper and then the lower parts of the chest contracting. Finally, allow your abdominal muscles to contract thereby pushing out whatever air remains.

Practice deep breathing for a few minutes every day. Also do it whenever you have some free time or when you are feeling stressed.

## YOGA

The word 'Yoga' conjures up the picture of various physical feats like *asanas*, exercises, *pranayam* and also spiritual discipline. The practice of yoga is rooted deep in Indian culture. The yoga therapy for various diseases and physical fitness has been with us right from the ancient times. However, the medical science did not accept yoga as a therapy. Of late, medical scientists have begun to take interest in yoga as a very useful tool in bringing about relaxation of the body and the mind and also recommend its application in developing immunity. The resurgence of interest in yoga is due to the accepted benefits of biofeedback – the therapy which has become an established mode of treatment in various stress-related autoimmune diseases and even cancer. Basically, the human body and its functions are regulated through nervous system consisting of brain, spinal cord and nerves. The nervous system has two distinct parts: one part is under the voluntary control and most of the ordinary functions of the body like, walking, doing work manually, etc. fall under the category of voluntary control. Many vital functions of the body like respiration, circulation, digestion, etc. are involuntary. This system which controls vital functions is known as autonomous nervous system. It consists of two parts, parasympathetic and sympathetic. One which comes into action in emergency is called a sympathetic system. Activation of this part increases adrenaline and corticosteroid hormone secretions leading to increase in heart rate, raising of blood pressure and

clumping of platelets increasing the viscosity of blood. The oxygen consumption of the body increases and so does lactic acid formation in the body. Wear and tear of the body are also increased; in terms of physics, the rate of entropy increases. The technique of Shavasana and meditation brings about its beneficial effects by quieting the sympathetic nervous system. This aspect of yoga has, therefore, particularly attracted the attention of medical science. Moreover, medical scientists have made this technique of meditation and Shavasana simple and easy for a beginner.

## **Science of Shavasana**

Shavasana has been practiced from ancient times in different ways. Physical and mental relaxation achieved by Shavasana has no equal.

Meditation as well as Shavasana are mental techniques to find Inner Peace. It is a world of peace, bliss and happiness. According to Maharshi Patanjali, Yoga is not a therapy, it is a discipline. A discipline is needed even when you are in good health. Yoga sutra has clearly stated that Shavasana and Meditation must be practiced consistently with complete devotion, perseverance and regularity.

The human body has developed some self-regulatory mechanisms for its survival. In the case of fear, the sympathetic nervous system is activated which prepares the individual either to fight or run away from the fear (flight). As the danger disappears, the parasympathetic nervous system comes into action. This calms down the individual. In real emergency situations, stimulation of sympathetic activity is helpful to “fight”. Hence it is known as sympathetic. However, when it remains stimulated during chronic stress and in imaginary fearful situations, it is a drain on the energy of the individual and proves harmful. Shavasana and meditation activate the parasympathetic nervous system which makes secretion of hormones like adrenalin, noradrenalin and corticosteroid normal. As a result, the heart rate, blood pressure and blood sugar become normal. Blood becomes thin and the arteries dilate. The formation of lactic acid is also reduced which results in retardation of the aging process. Endorphins and neuro-peptides are secreted from the brain. This brings peace and joy. It is noted that when an individual achieves this relaxation, slow rhythmic alpha activity is recorded from the frontal lobe of the brain.

Various chemical changes occurring in the body promote healing by increasing the immune status of the individual. Thus, all the degenerative processes of the body are retarded and regenerative processes get accelerated.

Shavasana and meditation explain scientifically how you could exercise your optimum capacity for efficient and productive action. Your present actions are not tuned for maximum output. That is because of lack of mental concentration. As you are acting in the present, your mind rambles into the past and fantasizes about the future. It broods over memories of what has been done earlier or over expectations of results to come. Your mind hardly remains in the present. This is the quality of the human mind. Shavasana and meditation provide you with the ways and means of controlling the mind. They help you to concentrate, to channel your mind towards the present activity. Shavasana and meditation prevent the dissipation of your mental energy in unproductive channels of the past and the future. Your activities are thereby rendered more efficient, more fruitful, and more productive. They provide a blue-print for efficiency, productivity and prosperity.

The practice of Shavasana prepares the individual for meditation. Shavasana, as we know, stems from the progressive deep relaxation. It is achieved by prior stretching and relaxation of the group of muscles one by one as shown by the various stretching and relaxation exercises. Indeed, bringing of awareness to the present, that is, to the process of stretching and relaxing is of crucial importance. As the Father of medicine Hippocrates has observed, the mind is present in all the cells of the body and so when the body is relaxed during Shavasana, the mind too automatically relaxes. This is the essence of Shavasana.

### **Technique of Shavasana:**

Normally to practice Shavasana one lies down flat on his back. However, Shavasana can be practiced even in a sitting posture. In our program, quite a few have practiced it while sitting in a wheel chair. The Practice of Shavasana begins with bringing one's awareness onto one's body. Normally our mind is wandering. Bringing the awareness to the body and keeping it there, is the first vital step to control the wandering mind. With practice one can bring the awareness onto the body very gently and if the

mind wanders, without undue force gently bring it back to the body. The benefits derived from Shavasana depend upon the adherence to the simple guidelines explained here.

Lie on your back. Keep your feet 12" apart. Let each foot lie on its side in a comfortable position. Keep your arms 6" away from the body with your palms facing the sky and fingers half bent.

Bring your awareness to the feet and bend the toes towards the ground, feel the stretch and then relax. Repeat this exercise. Now forget the toes.

Bring your awareness to your left leg. Stretch the muscles of the left leg from toes to the hips, lifting the leg a little off the ground. Feel the stretching of the muscles. Then relax. The leg will automatically fall to the ground. Repeat the same. Now forget the left leg and repeat the same with the right leg.

Bring your awareness to your back. Contract the muscles of the lower back and pelvic region (around the hip joints). The body will rise slightly off the ground. Feel the stretch, and then relax. The body will come down automatically. Repeat the same.

Bring your awareness to your chest. Contract the muscles of the chest while inhaling and raising the chest a little off the ground. Feel the stretch and then relax. The chest will come down automatically. Repeat the same.

Bring your awareness to your arms. Close both fists. Contract the muscles of the whole arms up to the shoulder lifting the arms a little above the ground. Feel the stretch and then relax. The arms will come down automatically to the ground. Repeat the same.

Rotate the neck from one side to another side gently as if somebody is holding the neck and moving it. Feel the stretch, and then relax keeping the neck in a comfortable position.

Bring your awareness to your jaws. Open the lower jaw towards the chest and experience the stretching of the muscles of the jaws and the cheeks. Feel the stretch and then relax, bringing the jaw back to the normal position. Repeat the exercise.

Open the eyes gently and fully, stretching the muscles of the eyes, eye-brows and the forehead. Feel the stretch. Then relax these muscles, letting the eyes close effortlessly. Repeat this exercise.

Having relaxed the whole body, the practitioner remains in the relaxed position forgetting his whole body, and brings his awareness to the natural process of breathing.



Resting in the comfortable position he gradually becomes one with the breath and remains in that state for a few minutes.

While he is one with his breath, he is meditating. So in a nut-shell, Shavasana starts with meditation on the body and ends with meditation on the breath.

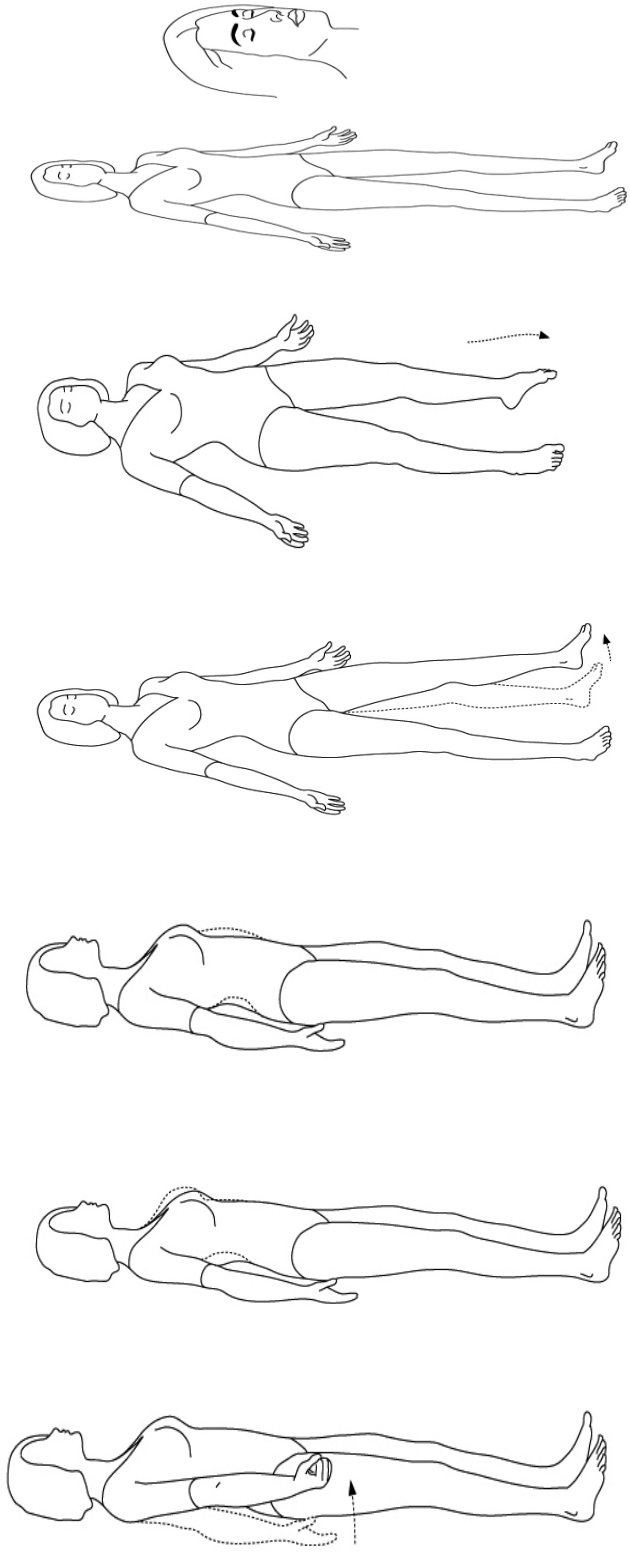
## **Quick Shavasana**

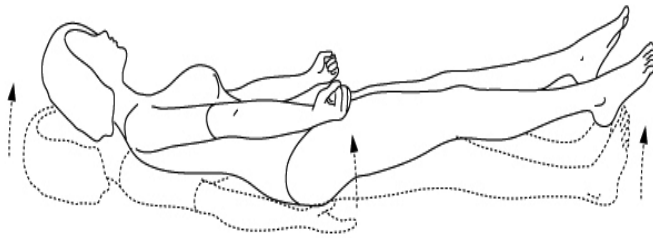
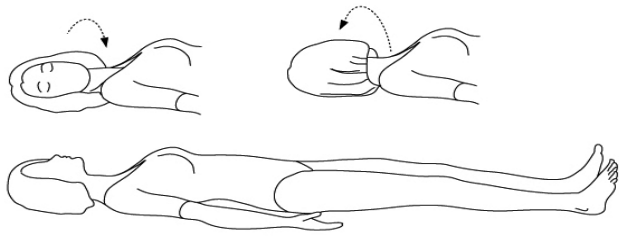
Swami Satchidanandaji has shown a technique to perform Shavasana in a short time.

One lies flat in a relaxed position. Having brought his awareness to his body and gently keeping it there, he contracts the muscles of the whole body, raising his head a little off the ground. His arms, the lower trunk and both legs are also raised a little off the ground. He experiences the stretch in all the muscles for a few seconds and then relaxes them bringing the body back to position and experiences the relaxation in the whole body. He does the same exercise once again.

In the relaxed posture, forgetting the body, the practitioner focuses his awareness on the natural process of breathing. Without making any effort to change breathing, he becomes a witness to every single breath that goes in through the nose during inhalation and every single breath that comes out during exhalation. This way he becomes one with his breath. He remains in this blissful state for two or three minutes. Then he takes in a deep breath and exhales slowly. He gently opens his eyes, makes some movement of his hands and feet, turns on his side and assumes sitting position.

The whole exercise would take less than five minutes but it refreshes the practitioner for a long time. It is easy to see that a complaint of lack of time to do this simple asana is irrelevant. Those who have back pain may not contract the muscles of the whole body. They may contract only the muscles of the hands and lower trunk, raising only the hands and the legs off the ground, keeping the upper trunk and head in a resting flat position.





## Science of Meditation

**Prescription for the Present Day Ills:** The last two decades of a fascinating century have witnessed an unprecedented change in many of our values, systems and customs. This change invites a challenge to look at one's inner self and external situation and balance these two distinct and yet inter-related worlds. The balance between the inner

and the outer worlds - the spiritual and the physical - is the only valid response to the demands of life in the present times for the survival of the human race. The practice of meditation helps to overcome the worry and stress of modern life and achieve a state of calmness. This at once refreshes the mind, relaxes the body, and thus achieves a balance between the spiritual and the physical.

The word “Meditation” is derived from the Latin word ‘Meditari’, which means to heal. Meditation heals the whole man - body, mind and soul.

**Why Meditation?** The human mind is constantly churning thoughts. It is always engaged in thinking of the past or of the future. It seldom remains in the present. It is estimated that an average person remains in the present for hardly an hour and a half during 16 hours of his waking period. This wandering state of mind causes stress, which alters the immune response and causes many stress-related diseases.

The greatest limitation comes from our perception that we are merely individuals limited in space and time. Man sees himself as a separate entity. This is an illusion, even if a stubborn one, and creates isolation. The feeling that the other person is separate from you is the root cause of hostility, self-centeredness and cynicism. In fact, we are also eternal, limitless in time and space, without a beginning or an end. When the individual experiences his real identity, he feels connected with the rest of the world, wisdom dawns on him and his capacity becomes unlimited. Meditation has the potential to enable the individual to experience his real identity. But meditation is even more than this.

**What is Meditation?** Remember an activity in which you were totally engrossed. In such a state you did not realize how the time passed. Even when several hours passed you felt as if hardly a few minutes had elapsed. It is a wonderful experience. Your vision widens. Your time-sense expands. Such a condition is called “Meditation”.

Meditation is simply bringing our total awareness on one point or subject. It may be our breath, a rhythmic sound or any other activity. There is nothing esoteric about meditation. It is easy and can be performed by anyone. In order to meditate, one need not empty or control one’s mind.

Meditation brings our awareness on the process of what is happening in the present rather than on the goal. When we think of the goal, generally fear and worry accompany.

But when the awareness is kept on the process, there is no fear or worry, and the process becomes more effective.

- Awareness of each moment is meditation.
- Meditation gives an experience of eternity of time.

**Benefits of Meditation:** Meditation has recently become a part of prescription in the treatment of coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, insomnia, rheumatoid arthritis, peptic ulcer, certain skin diseases and even cancer. With only three minutes of meditation, oxygen consumption is reduced by 20% as compared to 8% reduction of oxygen consumption after six hours of sleep. The rate of increase of entropy (wear and tear) which is common to all living things also drops during meditation.

Meditation can be extended to many other areas of life. For example, if you bring your awareness to the process of eating, you will not overeat. Even while you are walking, if you bring your awareness to the process of walking, the benefits are increased.

## **Technique of Meditation**

### **Preparing for Meditation:**

Select a quiet corner. However, with practice you will be able to do it anywhere and at any time. It can be done in sitting position on the floor, in a chair, lying on your back or even in the standing position. Meditation becomes easy after Shavasana. If there is no time for Shavasana, one may take some few slow deep breaths or do abdominal breathing which will calm the mind. Whenever you feel upset, taking a few slow deep breaths can break the stress cycle and calm you down. Even when you cannot control the situation, you can always control your breath and change your reactions to those circumstances.

During meditation, normally keep the eyes closed to avoid distractions. It is equally important to keep the body still. However the body tends to move in the beginning. Ignore it and continue meditation. If you still feel uncomfortable, you may move a little to assume a more comfortable posture. Meditation can also be done by becoming one with a rhythmic sound like Ohm. One may not meditate immediately after meals. During

meditation the blood flows towards the brain whereas blood is needed by the digestive system after the meal. Normally one may meditate for 10 to 20 minutes every morning and evening. The schedule should be free from stress. Meditation even for 2 to 3 minutes is beneficial. Regularity in practice of meditation is more important than the length of time.

**Technique of Meditation:** There are several techniques of meditation. Here is one which we have found simple to adopt.

- Sit on the floor cross-legged. It is called *sukhasana*.
- Rest your hands on the knees with palms upwards and fingers half-bent in a relaxed position.
- Sit erect and still. However avoid stiffness. Gently close the eyes.
- See with the closed eyes that there is no stress in any part of the body from toe to head.
- Do abdominal breathing to quiet the mind. Now bring your awareness to the process of breathing. Experience the cool air of the breath going in and the warm air coming out of the nostrils. Be one with the process of breathing. Let not a single breath go in or out without your awareness.
- While breathing you inhale not just air but also Prana- the Life-Force and Light.
- Thoughts will come and go but you remain unconcerned. Keep your awareness on the process of breathing.
- If your mind still wanders during meditation, gently bring it back to the breathing. Such efforts are part of meditation. Continue meditating until you feel comfortable.
- Now gently open your eyes and slowly come out of meditation.

**When is Meditation Successful?** As soon as you bring your awareness to the process of breathing and become one with it, meditation begins. During meditation time-sense expands. One does not realize how much time has elapsed.

**Why Some Find Meditation Difficult?** You cannot force yourself to meditate. It becomes easy when done in an effortless way. Some people distrust their technique of meditation and are in search of a better method. In fact, all the methods lead to effective meditation.

## One Minute Meditation

We breathe all the time. In fact, breath is our life. Yet normally we need not be aware that we are breathing. However, if we cultivate the habit to be aware of our breathing for just one minute every 90 minutes of our waking hours, we would be in the control of a very powerful tool to manage our stress in day-to-day living. The technique is simple. We assume a comfortable position: whatever is feasible in that particular circumstance. Then, without changing the character of breathing or controlling it in any way, just begin to observe it entering the nostrils during inspiration (inhalation) and coming out from the nostrils during expiration (exhalation). The idea is to observe the breathing as it is occurring in its natural way. While we observe breathing, thoughts may come but one need not make frantic efforts to stop the thoughts but only make a gentle effort (mark the word 'gentle') to keep our awareness on the process of breathing. We watch that breathing for about 4 or 5 breaths going into and coming out of the nostrils. Then for next 8 to 10 breaths we mentally say either 'I' when we breathe in and 'AM' when we breathe out - or 'SO' when the breath goes in and 'HUM' when the breath comes out. One need not utter the words. They are mentally said as the breath goes in and when the breath comes out. At the end of 8 to 10 such breaths, one comes out of this one-minute meditation. With practice, it takes only one minute because on an average we breathe 14 to 16 times a minute. By doing this very simple exercise in the most natural, relaxed way one feels at peace with oneself. By observing this practice of one-minute meditation at every one-and-a-half to two hours during the day one begins to understand the nature of one's breathing. When the mind is at peace, breathing is quiet and abdominal, that is when the breath goes in, the tummy rises a little and when the breath comes out, the tummy falls. This is natural abdominal breathing. When the mind is disturbed, then either the individual holds the breath or breathing becomes rapid, shallow and thoracic; that is the upper part of the chest moves rapidly. The character of breathing is the mirror of the state of mind. With practice, during stress when the breathing is rapid and thoracic, one can willingly change the character of breathing to the abdominal. This calms the mind. This is known as the muscle-to-mind control of the stress.

## **Key Ideas**

- 1) During the relaxation exercises, the adrenaline dominant chemistry of the restless mind is replaced by the endorphin dominant chemistry of love and connectedness of peaceful mind.
- 2) Meditation is a restful, alert state of the mind body. It is a scientific tool prescribed by doctors rather than a sacred ritual.
- 3) You can meditate in one moment, in one minute or in five minutes increment. That 'I do not have time to meditate' is a lame excuse.
- 4) By stretching and lengthening the muscles very slowly, stressful impulses to the brain are reduced. Longer the muscle fibre, less the impulse traffic to the brain. This is the rationale for yogic stretching and relaxation.

## **.VISUALIZATION**

Visualization is creating a picture in your mind. It is easy to do after meditating because meditation helps to focus one's awareness. Visualization is not wishful thinking or fantasy, both of which are unfocused and passive. It is direct and active, and is a therapeutic use of meditation. During meditation the patients of coronary heart disease can visualize the clearing up of blockages in their coronary arteries and the resumption of blood supply to the heart muscles. Visualization is the most challenging and perhaps the most powerful of all the techniques in this program of coronary healing. Such a stress can be resolved by forgiving the person during visualization. We forgive not to be a good person but simply because it is in our own interest to do so. By forgiving, we feel free of stress, pain and disease. After you feel comfortable with visualization technique, you can go a step further. Keeping your eyes closed, imagine an experience in your life that you regret — something that you did or did not do for which you never have forgiven yourself. (You do not have to tell anyone what it is, just visualize it). Now feel the same compassion for yourself that you felt for the person in the previous visualization.

Past is past. I have suffered enough. I forgive myself for what happened. You probably will feel very relaxed. After you have completed this process, continue to observe your breathing for a few minutes. Open your eyes when you are ready. Again, forgiving



yourself does not absolve you from your responsibility. It will help to relieve you of the pain, stress and guilt that you may have imposed on yourself.

## **Auto-suggestions**

During the relaxed state of the body and the mind (*Shavasana*) our participants are taught to use auto-suggestions to improve coronary circulation. Auto-suggestions during meditation also have a very powerful effect on the physiology of the body. This has been the subject of bio-feedback and self-hypnosis in the management of various illnesses. We have taken help of auto-suggestions in our Program for even changing the food habits.

The beneficial effect of auto-suggestions in choosing the food habit of the participant is a subject of active research. Auto-suggestions during meditation increase the inner strength of an individual to choose the right type of food and enjoy it and feel empowered to give up eating his most favourite dishes. He can let go of his favourite dairy-rich chocolate ice-cream without feeling the sense of deprivation and experience the fact that he can now do without it.

## **IDEAL DIET**

In an average Indian diet the fat content is about 30% - 40% of the total calories. There is a general feeling that fat gives strength and energy. In small quantity fat is required for some important body functions. Fat stored in the body acts as a reserve source of energy in case of inadequate or no intake of food. Excessive fat leads to lethargy and sedentary habits which in turn increase obesity with all its disadvantages. The diet recommended here is pure vegetarian, even excluding large amount of fat free milk (animal protein). The diet should be rich in complex carbohydrates and vegetable proteins like grains, pulses, lentils, fresh green vegetables and seasonal fruits. However the intake of simple carbohydrates should be limited; they are refined sugar, *jaggery*, polished rice, preparations of rice (puffed rice, *poha*), commercially prepared glucose, honey and sugarcane juice. Simple carbohydrates are rapidly absorbed leading to

increased insulin secretion with its attendant disadvantages such as increase in cholesterol synthesis and deposition of fat.

Complex carbohydrates are rich in fibre. They are slow in absorption, so a feeling of satiety comes with smaller quantities of food. Blood sugar fluctuations are minimum and insulin secretion is normal.

The body requires only about 4% to 6% of calories from fat to synthesize what are known as the essential fatty acids. Reversal diet has 10% fat which is more than enough. Above 30% dietary fat leads to excess weight, heart disease and other illnesses.

## **FIBRE**

Fibre makes the roughage of food. It is also rich in some vitamins and minerals. It is available from the outer coat of grains (bran), pulses, and from fruits and vegetables.

The advantages of fibre in diet are many. It constitutes the bulk and gives the feeling of fullness with smaller quantities of food, and thus controls weight. It helps reduce calorie intake, lowers cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood, slows down the absorption of carbohydrates, steadies blood sugar levels, relieves constipation and prevents fissures, piles and probably even colon cancer.

## **SALT**

Salt causes the body to retain fluids. If you consume a lot of salt, your body retains more water to dilute the salt concentration to proper levels. Therefore, eating a lot of salt makes the weight loss difficult. There is also some evidence that the increased consumption of salt accelerates the hardening of arteries.

It is common knowledge that the patients of high blood pressure and heart disease benefit by limiting salt intake. Canned foods, various ketchups, sauces, salad dressings, pickles, *papads* and most varieties of bread and biscuits are rich in salt. Leafy vegetables are inherently rich in salts and need less salt in their preparations.

Experts recommend not more than 1100 to 3300 mg of sodium for adults. The American Heart Association recommends 1000 mg of sodium with every 1000 calories intake, not exceeding 3000 mg. One teaspoonful of salt contains approximately 2000 mg

of sodium. By adding green *chillies*, coriander leaves, lime and other spices to food the use of salt can be reduced. Natural taste and flavour are enjoyed better with less salt. Like all tastes salt is also an acquired taste.

## **FREE RADICALS**

Free radicals are a by-product of normal metabolism and their production varies in response to the kind of diet, sunlight, x-ray and pollution such as cigarette smoke and car exhaust fumes. The excess of free radicals damages the cells of the body, hastens ageing and contributes to causing heart disease, cancer, lung diseases and cataract.

They also impair the function of the immune system. The diet of animal fat and red meat is rich in oxidants. They cause the body to produce excess of free radicals. A vegetable diet rich in complex carbohydrates and low in fat is high in anti-oxidants that help the body to remove free radicals.

Beta carotene which is provitamin A as well as vitamins C and E are antioxidants. They are free radical scavengers and hence useful in the treatment of atherosclerotic diseases.

## **EATING WITH AWARENESS**

In our busy schedule we have many things to do at a time. To eat leisurely may seem a luxury. We gulp down breakfast while reading a newspaper, have lunch attending phone calls, eat a dinner watching T.V. or engrossed in a conversation. When this happens, we consume food without being aware of the amount or the taste of food. When we are eating and doing something else we are not focusing on what we are eating, with the result that we do not enjoy our food fully. We are also likely to overeat, and digest food less effectively.

When we eat with awareness, we enjoy our food fully, and are conscious of the quantity of food we eat. So overeating is avoided in order to control weight. Moreover, when we eat with awareness, we observe that a rich fatty meal makes us sluggish and tired. On the other hand, with the low-fat high complex carbohydrate diet, with small

quantities we feel satisfied, light, and energetic. This motivates us to make the right choices while eating.

All religions and cultures have a tradition of saying a prayer before eating. Prayer calms the mind and helps one to enjoy the food with awareness. When we eat without awareness, we not only fill the hunger but also fill the void within with food. The feeling of void is due to the sense of isolation. Meditation heals isolation and is thus a food for the soul. It helps in more than one way in letting us enjoy our food and yet control weight.

## **Obesity**

Obesity is on the increase worldwide. It is a complex multifactorial disease of appetite regulation and energy metabolism. Additionally, many factors affect how much or how little food a person eats and how that food is metabolised, or processed by the body. Hence losing weight is not simple.

Obesity creates many health problems. It can cause high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis, and certain types of cancer. It also affects longevity.

Many attempts have been made to reduce excessive weight. Haphazard attempts to control obesity are usually not effective. Dieting, fasting and excessive physical exercises also do not help in the long run. When you are on a diet, the fat cells shrink, but their number is not reduced. When you are on a diet, you have a continual feeling of remaining hungry. Some people take medication to reduce their appetite and try crash dieting to lose weight, but such attempts have at times proved injurious to health.

**Factors Contributing to Obesity:** A diet with too much fat is at the root of this problem. The body needs only four to six per cent of the total calorie intake as fat, whereas most people consume 35 to 40 per cent of total calories as fat. Vegetarians use too much oil in their diet. It is important to remember that all oil is hundred per cent fat. Our fat consumption has reached unbearable levels by increased use of milk, ghee, butter, cheese and fried foods.

Further, consumption of sweets, ice cream, chocolates, cookies, soft drinks, etc. has increased significantly as a part of modern life-style. All these contain too many simple carbohydrates in the form of sugar which is an important factor in causing excess weight.

Moreover, an imbalance between calorie intake and calorie consumption through exercise and metabolism results in excess weight. A sedentary life, hypothyroidism, Corticosteroids, antidepressant medications and heredity are also major causes of excess weight.

The soluble fibre found in guar gum, *psyllium* husk, the skin of apples, oat bran and most fruits and vegetables is effective in reducing cholesterol, controlling appetite and controlling blood sugar in diabetics.

Eating fibre-rich food helps the body to get rid of excess hormones and normalizes body processes. Normal hormones mean less risk of hormone-related cancers like breast cancer, cervical cancer, prostate cancer and ovarian cancer.

The use of excessive salt in a diet tends to cause water retention in the body. Hence, it is difficult for lovers of salt to lose weight.

Isolation also plays an important role in the cause of obesity. The present social structure breeds isolation. Some seek a cure for isolation in tobacco; others try to fill their inner emptiness by overeating. This is a kind of compulsive obsession. Many indulge in it in spite of knowing its ill effects. On such occasions if one meditates for a while, compulsive behaviour can be transformed into behaviour of choice. Meditation calms down your body and mind to such an extent that you discover why you overeat.

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To reduce weight, experts recommend walking at moderate pace for 30 to 40 minutes daily.

Prolonged rhythmic light exercise provides an opportunity for the body to burn fat as fuel. Research has further shown that regular light exercise reduces hunger.

People today do not have time to eat at ease. They eat while doing other activities. Food is often gulped down without proper chewing. This leads to overeating. Adequate chewing makes food more enjoyable. If you concentrate on eating, you know what and

how much you have eaten. It enables one to make a rational choice to avoid sweet and fatty food.

Acute hunger militates against rational choices in eating. Hence it is easier to control weight by eating small quantities more frequently. The intake of light snacks or fruit twice a day besides two regular meals reduces fluctuation in blood sugar. One should eat enough to satisfy hunger but avoid overeating.

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A diet should be such that it can be adopted easily and made acceptable to the whole family. Nature has bestowed every object of food with unique taste and smell.

One can reduce the use of sugar to some extent by depending on the natural sweetness of fresh and dry fruits. Sprouted beans add variety to meals. Green salads with dressings of curd "*raitas*" with fruit are also tasty to eat.

There is a Zen proverb "As you perform one activity, so you perform all activities." If you eat fast, you are likely to live your life fast. If you feel nourished by food, you learn to look for nourishment in many other ways. If you choose healthy food, you are likely to make healthy choices in other spheres of life too. If you eat with concentration on your food, you are inspired to lead your whole life with full consciousness and awareness.

If we choose restraint in life, its effects prove more beneficial. Self-imposed restraint creates a sense of freedom. When you decide to abstain from fatty foods and sweets to reduce weight, you easily obtain the strength to achieve your goal, because you have accepted the restraint without any pressure from the outside. Strengthening of will power by meditation helps in getting rid of any obsessive behaviour, compulsion or addiction.

While counselling a person with gross obesity, one should have adequate patience and compassion. It should be explained that even a small reduction in weight leads to a large benefit in health.

### **Coming of new age**

The mother of Pondicherry observed during the final years of her life that we are now witnessing the birth of a new human species, a new world. The rise of a new species

is visible, although the vision is dim and hence may elude many of us. Many do not know about it and some even refuse to believe in it. In any case, a new species is evolving and is capable of growing fully.

Our soul is that part of us that is immortal. A personality that is limited in its perception to the five senses is not aware of the qualities of its soul. The entire universe is a manifestation of an everlasting and immortal element. Humankind is the noblest part of the process of evolution so far.

In our journey, if we want the qualities of Soul to be manifested in our external life, if we want its comprehensive power to grow in our existence, the only prerequisite is to maintain harmony in our feelings every moment. It is natural in this diversified universe that harmony is disturbed and we remain preoccupied with discord. Feeling of discord in our sentiments obstructs the full growth of the qualities of Soul in our life. If we dispel discord and bring harmony in our feeling, all the beneficial powers of our Soul will manifest in our life and we can lead a life of healthy longevity. Although we appear distinctly different, we are all one at one level. If this sentiment grows in the whole mankind, a new age will begin. Shavasana and Meditation are handy tools to develop a sense of oneness and facilitate the birth of a new age- a new man.

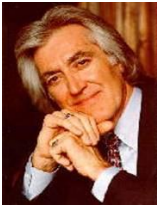
### **For Back Cover**

This small book attempts to cover topics on **Philosophy and Spirituality of Health, Science and Technology of Healing, Universal Healing Program for total health, Role of Shavasana and Meditation in promoting healthy longevity, practical tips on Diet and Obesity and Evolution of Human Species, from the widely acclaimed books**

**authored by Dr. Ramesh Kapadia.** Dr. Ramesh Kapadia is a practicing cardiac physician, who has been conducting Universal Healing Program (UHP) for last two decades and has authored eight books on coronary heart disease published by Navajivan Publishing House established by Mahatma Gandhi in 1919.



**Dr. Ramesh Kapadia**



**Larry Dossey MD**

Larry Dossey an eminent thinker of USA on Mind Body Medicine observes about UHP,

"In my opinion you are on a true path that shall lead to a form of medicine more glorious than any previously known to the human race. I shall continue to think of your program as a star burning brightly in the East, whose brilliance becomes stronger each day.

In your program, combining the best of scientific and spiritual insights, you continue to show the way to the medicine of the future. In the future, when the history of healing in India is written, Universal Healing will occupy a high place."