

# HEALTH HARMONY AND LONGEVITY

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Could a combination of relaxation, meditation, modest exercise, a vegetarian diet low in fat, and group support achieve the reversal of coronary heart disease?

The answer is YES.

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is a global phenomenon. Increasingly, people in the prime of life from all parts of the world, including India, are victims of this disease. The tell-tale causes of coronary heart disease are heredity, high blood pressure, diabetes, high serum cholesterol, smoking, and sedentary habits. The way of living and the way of feeling appear to be quite important factors in its rising incidence. Hostility, lack of social support, job and family stress are the major causes of heart attack even amongst the young.

The present medical approach is to dilate the coronary arteries and increase the blood flow through them, and diminish the need of oxygenated blood by the heart muscle. The surgical approach is the bypassing of the narrowed arteries or dilating them by inflating a balloon inserted in the narrowed artery. These are palliative measures and do not completely deal with the root cause of the problem.

Dr. Dean Ornish has been conducting a unique program in the USA, which has proved a boon to the patients of severe coronary heart disease. He has shown that coronary heart disease can be reversed by comprehensive life-style changes. The changes include a very low fat vegetarian diet, mind-body stress management techniques, moderate exercise, smoking cessation and psychosocial support. Providing life-style changes in this new model as a valid alternative to the patients, who otherwise would receive coronary bypass surgery or coronary angioplasty, results in immediate and substantial cost savings. Bypass grafts may become blocked and angioplastied arteries may clog up again. When this occurs, coronary bypass surgery or coronary angioplasty is repeated, thereby incurring additional cost and risk.

With spiralling health care cost, prevention and less expensive treatment of coronary heart disease ought to be our foremost concern for the teeming millions of our country. We are committed to this goal.

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

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.

**Diet:** Ordinarily our diet is rich in fats, simple carbohydrates, and contains excess salt. Fat is almost 30% to 40% of the total calorie intake. It is recommended for heart patients that dietary fat should not exceed 10% of the total calories. Experts recommend not more than 3 grams of sodium for adults.

A non-vegetarian diet is rich in fat, cholesterol and oxidants which increase the production of free radicals in the body. An excess of free radicals damages body cells, accelerates aging and atherosclerosis, and increases proneness to heart disease, cancer, lung diseases, and cataract. Hence a pure vegetarian diet is recommended. A vegetarian diet, being rich in complex carbohydrates, has antioxidant properties which reduce free radicals in the blood. In our program, a qualified dietician guides the participants regarding proper diet and gives individual advice, taking into account the dietetic habits of the family.

**Exercise:** Regular daily walking on a level surface at a moderate speed for 30 to 40 minutes is recommended.

**Shavasana:** Shavasana has been practiced from ancient times in different ways. Physical and mental relaxation achieved by Shavasana has no equal. During Shavasana slow rhythmic alpha activity is increased from the frontal lobe of the brain, and various chemical changes occurring in the body promote healing by increasing the immune status of the individual.

**Meditation and Visual Imagery (Visualisation):** It is difficult to calm the mind even for a few seconds. It is estimated that out of 16 hours of our waking time, we live in the present for hardly an hour and a half. Most of the time our awareness is in the past or future. Meditation helps us to stay in the present moment. It diminishes the need of oxygen by the heart muscles. Within only three

minutes of meditation, 20% of oxygen consumption is reduced as compared with only 8% reduction in oxygen consumption after six hours of sound sleep.

Meditation brings our awareness into the present by focusing it on the process of breathing as well as some sound like Ohm. It slows down the rate of entropy. In other words, wear and tear are reduced. This results in better health and longevity. Progressive deep relaxation, i.e. Shavasana prepares one for meditation. The technique of meditation is simple. Sit in a comfortable manner and gently close your eyes. Bring your awareness to the process of breathing. Simply watch the inhaling and exhaling of your breath. Thoughts may come and go but you remain unconcerned. Breath is life. When you are breathing, it is not only air that you inhale, you breathe in light and life force also. Thus your consciousness becomes one with your breath and life force, and healing follows. When we try to focus our awareness on the natural process of breathing, various thoughts disturb us and our awareness centers round these thoughts. However, we humans have a unique gift of being able to direct our awareness wherever we wish. Every time that the awareness wanders to the thoughts, it is gently brought back to breathing. This is the essence of meditation. Meditation motivates the individuals to adopt a healthy life-style. During meditation one experiences that one is eternal and boundless. The feeling of connectedness with the universe and wisdom dawns on the individual. This experience helps healing in toto. The perception of real identity and of non-flowing time brings about the desired changes. Our greatest limitation is that we perceive ourselves as individuals limited in space and time. This perception is real but not total. There is another dimension of our reality (our larger self) free from the bounds of space and time, which is the source of our everyday reality (our smaller self). During meditation one experiences the boundless dimension of one's reality. What we experience as the flowing time accelerates wear and tear. When we experience the eternal presence and the real identity, the sense of isolation, self-centeredness and hostility comes to an end. Visualisation means formation of images in one's mind. It is not wishful thinking or fantasy, both of which are unfocused and passive. Visualisation is direct and active. It is a therapeutic use of meditation. During meditation, the patient can visualise the cleaning up of blockages in coronary arteries and resumption of blood supply to heart muscles. It also enables us to forgive others for wrongs done to us and it redeems us of any accumulated sense of guilt.

**Group Discussion and Sharing of Feelings:** These are also useful parts of the program. Mere expression and sharing of the problems result in reduction in the stress response and substantially benefits healing.

The occurrence of a heart attack is a dynamic process. All of a sudden, the narrowed arteries become further narrowed due to spasm, and the blood flowing through the artery becomes thick due to an increase in the viscosity of blood and the clumping of platelets. This is usually a result of extreme sympathetic activity following undue physical and mental exhaustion and stress. A heavy meal, alcohol, and smoking aggravate the arterial spasm and clotting of blood. The practice of Shavasana, meditation, and change in food habits with avoidance of alcohol and smoking blunts the edge of these harmful reactions and saves the patient from heart attack.

Dr. Dean Ornish has noted that self-centredness, hostility, and cynicism are toxins to the heart. They constrict the arteries, whereas selfless benevolent work opens them up. The feeling of isolation is by far the most important factor in increasing the incidence of heart attack in the individuals who are prone to it on other scores. The feeling of isolation and hostility in cancer-prone individuals triggers the incidence of cancer and also affects the immune system, causing psoriasis, arthritis and peptic ulcer.

**Results of the Program:** In one study by Dr. Dean Ornish, 46 patients of coronary heart disease were randomly divided into two groups of 23 each. All of the 46 patients were given the conventional advice and treatment and a diet very low in fat. One group was taught stress management, which consisted of Shavasana, meditation, and visualisation. The results of a twenty-four day study revealed a significant difference in the clinical improvement between the two groups. The group which was taught the stress management technique showed much greater improvement indicated by an increase in work performance by 55% due to the improvement in the left ventricular function. There was a 20% fall in cholesterol level and a 90% reduction in the frequency of angina.

We have had a similar experience with almost all our patients. In a study of 113 patients, over and above the physical benefits of reduction in the frequency of angina and the increased capacity to

work, a very encouraging spiritual gain was observed in the increased confidence and wholesome attitude towards life circumstances. The fear of death almost vanished in a large number of them.

The program does not claim to be a panacea, nor is it opposed to the conventional medical approach including bypass surgery. It is felt that this program can serve as a model without compromising the quality of health.

**Expert Opinions:** Dr. Larry Dossey, Executive Director, Alternative Medicine, National Institute of Health, USA, writes:

“We have considered heart disease to be purely a physical condition. We have focused on discovering and eliminating risk factors like elevated cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, cigarette smoking and other minor risk factors. In treating CHD, we have relied almost exclusively on the physically based therapies - surgical procedures, drugs, dietary manipulation, and exercise.

As valuable as these approaches are, we know that they are incomplete, frequently ineffective, costly, and sometimes hazardous. The other methods such as those employed by the Universal Healing Program, based on the landmark work of Dr. Dean Ornish, have resulted in equal and often superior results with less cost and fewer side effects.”

Dr. M. R. Girinath, a senior cardiovascular surgeon of India, writes about the UH Program:

“The incidence of CHD in India has shown steady increase during the last few decades. In contrast, in the western countries there has been a steady decrease in the incidence of this dreaded disease. The opposing trends highlight the fact that we are not paying enough attention to the preventive measures... Having been active in the management of coronary artery disease, especially with respect to the interventional methods of treatment such as balloon angioplasty and bypass surgery, I am firmly convinced that though these forms of treatment have their own place, prevention is always better than cure.”

## **Lifestyle changes with help of Yoga**

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 (ISMISS). 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 control, reversal and cure of his/her coronary artery disease.**

## **Present Scenario in Health Sector**

The rapid strides in science and technology over the past century have placed us in a position to have accurate and reliable knowledge about the human body to the minutest detail. In the field of

coronary artery disease (CAD), we now have a battery of scanning and imaging devices to help us with diagnosis, treatment and prevention of CAD.

These developments have undoubtedly proved to be a great boon for the patients. Modern technology is striving continuously for greater effectiveness and ease for the user. Cardiologists, physicians and surgeons, use their expertise to achieve higher standards of successful outcome for the immediate and long-term well being of patients.

Our body, however, is a complex entity governed by constantly interacting bio-chemical, psychological and cultural forces. Every ailment is a product of organic forces and events as well as a patient's psychosocial profile at a given time. Hence it is obligatory to manage disease with the patient as an active partner in the process. Such a partnership provides clues to a cost effective, successful strategy to achieve healing.

We now have sufficient evidence to propose that a participative approach to healing is advantageous to both health providers as well as the patients. This perspective should serve to rationalize the cost for providing the care to patients. From the point of view of government and society at large, rationalization of cost will result in a more productive deployment of human as well as material resources in the health sector which is a vital part of a nation's progress and prosperity.

This perspective on disease and healing has been gaining acceptance all over the globe. An integral approach in CAD management such as the Universal Healing Program serves to demonstrate beyond doubt that a participative and holistic approach goes a long way in providing the best results at less expense and with a lasting assurance of wellbeing.

The art of communication with the patient is the key to successful approach to healing. This art should be taught at every stage of teaching in the medical schools. Without communication skill all the scientific knowledge and expertise fail to bring about the desired outcome. As a result, the cost of managing illness rises and the health providers and hospitals feel the stress of meeting the expenses of the establishment. This in turn reduces the effectiveness of a successful outcome.

The medical profession scenario is thus burdened with the rising cost of treatment and less satisfying results in patient welfare. Doctors and hospitals work under the continuous strain of balancing the expense and profit ratio below one. This dilemma can be successfully overcome by a patient centered approach and not merely a disease centered approach. Further, for attaining the communicative skills, a student has to have the wide ranging background of a well-rounded, thoughtful, wise person. Thus, there is the need in medical schools for courses in humanities and liberal arts.

This approach to healing needs to be widely shared with all stakeholders in the realm of health preservation. Most importantly, it needs to be incorporated into medical education. Medical students, who are to play a crucial role in shaping the health of people in the years ahead, should be taught an all-round holistic approach in management of the illness.

## **Negative Emotions and Heart**

It has come to light that conventional treatment with routine advice on lifestyle changes alone does not always succeed in preventing coronary heart disease. The Pooling Project Data have shown that while only ten per cent of those with more than six risk factors eventually had a heart attack, sixty per cent of those who had heart attack did have only one or none of the conventional risk factors operating in them. In one report from the USA, out of 500 stented angioplastied patients, as many as 125 restenosed within six months, although these stents were genetically treated to prevent occlusion. The researchers thought the cause of restenosis was probably an increased hostility score in these patients. They postulated how hostility per se can affect the endothelium of coronary arteries through chemical changes.

Research findings at Duke University Medical Center, N.C., USA also support the notion that hostility plays a role in the pathogenesis of coronary atherosclerosis and point to the potential importance of the interaction between hostility and other risk factors. Another study at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, also shows that hostility may predispose coronary artery disease patients to a more adverse prognosis.

**Hostility:** Hostility, in a wider sense, includes intense intolerance, extremely irritable temper, aggressive behaviour, self-centeredness and cynicism. A sense of isolation breeds hostility and hostility aggravates isolation. Hostile people are lonely. They go to parties, but cannot come out of their hostile shell to mix with others in a caring way. A hostile person ruminates in his own thoughts and is preoccupied with himself. Larry Sherwitz at the University of California, San Francisco shows that the more a person thinks of the first person pronouns (I, me, mine, myself), the greater the risk for a heart attack. Your preoccupation with yourself makes you more hostile because you do not include others in your agenda.

Expressed anger is associated with increased secretion of adrenaline and noradrenaline (catecholamine like chemicals). During caring-love, there is increased secretion of endorphins (opioids), phenylethylamine and oxytocin. The secretions are released throughout the body in a split second.

In March of 1997, Dr. Mark Ketterer of the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan, USA and associates reported their findings from a study of 144 men who had angiogram-positive coronary heart disease. Spouses and intimate friends of these men observed that they were excessively prone to anger, although the men under study denied getting angry. The study suggests that denial of anger is a stronger predictor of major cardiac events and death than traditional cardiovascular risk factors.

Self-centeredness, cynicism, hostility, hatred, jealousy, anger, frustration and vanity reduce the heart rate variability (HRV) - the most important protective factor for a long and happy life. A heart full of love for others is the best preventive against most degenerative diseases.

**Heart Rate Variability (HRV):** HRV is not cardiac arrhythmia or irregular heart beat; rather it is a variation in the sinus rhythm itself as it changes from beat to beat. This beat to beat time variation is in milliseconds and cannot be appreciated in a routine electrocardiogram. It can be captured only by advanced sensitive computers. In a normal person the HRV is rhythmic with a value of more than 50 milliseconds on an average between beats. Negative emotions like anger, frustration, envy, and worry, cause erratic and non-harmonious HRV. Positive emotions like caring-love, appreciation and compassion allow smooth, even and harmonious HRV. The disturbance in HRV is a sensitive index of mind and body malfunction. An Erratic HRV puts extra wear and tear on the blood vessels and heart. HRV has corresponding changes in cellular DNA and in the immune system. Increased sympathetic activity with dampening of parasympathetic pathways diminish heart rate variability and also make it erratic and non-harmonious. A Multicentre Post Infarction Research Group study found that low HRV, less than 50 milliseconds, has 5.3 times higher chances of sudden death in the patients recovering from heart attack.

The yogic disciplines such as abdominal breathing, Shavasana and meditation admirably bring about a reduction in the sympathetic activity and have beneficial effects on heart rate variability. Diaphragmatic breathing helps to clear fatigue. It enhances the lymphatic flow, strengthens the immune system, clears free radicals, and increases blood pH level. It also conserves energy by switching from the energy consuming sympathetic system to the energy conserving parasympathetic system. In management of acute stress, abdominal breathing gives relief as quick as sorbitrate does in angina.

Heart Resonance Imaging is another technique to bring beneficial effect on Heart Rate Variability. With Heart Resonance Imaging, you replace the conditioned reflex of anger with the reflex of caring-love. This cannot be done as a statement, declaration, or pep talk. It has to be developed as a biological reflex. If you diligently practice over 24 hours, you will be able to develop the new reflex. If you stay with it everyday for a week, you will master the new reflex. You will enjoy the unconditional caring-love state for the second time in your life - the first being when you were a child. The Heart Resonance Imaging steps are simple. During meditation:

- Focus awareness on your anatomical heart.
- Experience caring-love towards a particular person.
- Stay anchored to your heart.
- Observe your breathing in your belly as you stay anchored to your heart.
- Repeat these drills until you are able to shift your centering from your mind to heart and to belly effortlessly.

## Prevention of Heart Attack

Recent research in the field of cardiovascular medicine has improved our understanding of the pathogenesis (mechanism) of acute heart attack. Initially, it was believed that gradual narrowing of arteries with decades-long accumulation of cholesterol deposition leads to complete blockage of the arteries supplying the heart, resulting in a heart attack. However, evidence has accumulated over the years that most of the heart attacks are not due to chronic arterial narrowing. Landmark studies by Ambrose et al and Little et al showed that most heart attacks occur in the arteries that had blockage of less than 50% as seen by angiography. So, what really causes a heart attack? Dr. Michael Davies, a pathologist from England, observed in patients that die from a heart attack that there is a large blood clot at the site of a relatively small plaque (equivalent to angiographic narrowing of less than 50%). The next very important question was, 'what caused this blood clot at that particular site?' It was discovered that "something" leads to plaque rupture triggering the development of a massive blood clot in the coronary artery. This can cause sudden blockage of a major coronary artery leading to a massive heart attack. If the blood clot is not completely occlusive it can drift into smaller arteries resulting in a milder heart attack.

As you can imagine, the most important question is to identify the triggers for plaque rupture. Researchers are actively working on various fronts to identify the factors responsible for plaque rupture.

Some researchers have focused on the physical characteristics of a plaque to identify the plaque at risk. When plaques are visualized by intravascular ultrasound, some plaques appear soft (ultrasounds are not reflected well from these plaques) and others are fibrous or hard (good reflectors of ultrasound waves). **The soft plaques usually contain large amount of cholesterol, which is separated from the artery wall by a thin fibrous cover. Should the cover tear or rupture, blood from the artery wall washes over the cholesterol and triggers the clotting process. This clotting process is initiated by large numbers of platelets circulating in the blood that rush to the damaged artery wall. But what causes these soft plaques? If we can prevent the formation of new soft plaques and stabilize the ones already present, we can probably avoid a lot of heart attacks and sudden deaths.**

Certain factors responsible for the formation of soft plaque and ultimately plaque rupture are well defined. Cholesterol is one of them. LDL cholesterol, the lethal cholesterol, is the chief constituent of soft plaque. HDL cholesterol, the healthy cholesterol, removes LDL cholesterol from the blood and carries it to the liver for disposal. So ideally, for the prevention of soft plaque formation, HDL cholesterol, the good cholesterol, should be as high as possible and LDL cholesterol, the bad cholesterol, as low as possible.

High density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL) levels are positively affected by lifestyle modifications, including weight reduction, smoking cessation and exercise. Even mild to moderate excess weight is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease. There is a consistent linear association between weight loss and HDL concentrations in both men and women.

Sixty days of smoking cessation results in increased HDL levels. However, in those who begin smoking again, HDL levels return to lower levels after sixty days.

**Today's challenge is to identify and treat dangerous vulnerable plaques responsible for myocardial infarction and death; to find and treat only angina-producing stenotic lesions is no longer enough.**

Most people can maintain a healthy balance of HDL and LDL cholesterol by eating a diet that is low in saturated fats and high in fiber, which is found in whole grains, vegetables, legumes and fresh fruits. Other preventive measures for controlling cholesterol and reducing the risk of

plaque rupture include, non smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular exercise and controlling high blood pressure, which can damage the arteries and encourage formation of soft plaque. Some individuals cannot lower cholesterol to ideal level despite dietary discretion. It has been proven beyond doubt that these individuals can benefit from cholesterol-lowering medications. **Many effective and fairly safe lipid-lowering medications are available which, when given in adequate doses, can stabilize the soft plaque in patients suffering from unstable angina. For prevention of soft plaque formation these medications should be used in all individuals who are at high risk of coronary events.** The high-risk individuals are: people with a strong family history of heart attack in an immediate family member below the age of 60, smokers, those having high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, and those who have recovered from a coronary episode. **The use of lipid lowering medications to prevent or stabilize soft plaque could reduce the risk of heart attack as well as the need for invasive procedures such as coronary bypass surgery or balloon angioplasty. At present Atorvastatin is considered very effective and safe and is fortunately manufactured in India at an affordable price.** Recent research indicates that statins may also reduce the risk of colon cancer by 51%, prostate cancer by 56%, macular degeneration by 50%, glaucoma by 40%, erectile dysfunction by 30% and rheumatoid arthritis by 50%.

Other factors that lead to the formation and subsequent rupturing of soft plaque include oxidation of LDL cholesterol, high blood pressure, and bacterial infection. During oxidation, oxygen in the blood makes cholesterol sticky and more likely to adhere to artery walls. High blood pressure causes turbulence in blood that may damage the delicate linings of the arteries. Bacterial infection may cause inflammation that makes plaque weak and unstable. Physical and mental stress has been shown to significantly contribute to plaque rupture. Further, it increases the stickiness of the platelets, which are vulnerable to clot formation. The effects of stress are partly mediated by an increase in sympathetic activity. Beta-blockers, medications that decrease sympathetic activity, have been recommended to prevent heart attacks.

All studies related to coronary heart disease done in the USA and Europe up until this date have shown conclusively that beta-blockers, which reduce sympathetic activity, are helpful in preventing the recurrence of heart attack. However, beta-blockers only partially neutralize the deleterious effects of increased mental and physical stress. The Universal Healing program has proved to be a beta-blocker Par Excellence. It is not only effective like beta blockers in controlling the increased sympathetic activity but is also without any side effects whatsoever. Moreover, it protects against other mechanisms by which increased stress can lead to plaque rupture. Cytokine activation and neuro-inflammation are some of the putative mechanisms but the exact mediators of deleterious effects of stress are not fully known. **Therefore, this program that helps to control all the harmful effects of stress, which is the chief culprit, provides a more robust method than hitherto known therapeutic measures to prevent plaque rupture and achieve plaque stabilization.** Furthermore, it has several other benefits like increasing the inner strength of the individual and promoting healthy life-style changes without the feeling of deprivation. It heals isolation, reduces hostility, self-centeredness and cynicism-proven toxins to the heart and the body as a whole.

Many of today's common diseases, such as heart problems, diabetes and immune system disorders, are believed to be due to gene mutations which result from complex interactions between genes and environmental factors. This is because the human genome changes continuously due to errors in DNA replication. Practice of Shavasana and Meditation has a potential to prevent the mutation of healthy genes into disease-causing ones.

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

- **Weight:** Watch your weight. Even an increase of more than 3 kg 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.

## 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. The body also slows down the basal metabolic rate (BMR), the rate of energy consumption. As a result, the weight does not reduce in spite of reducing the intake of food. Repeated dieting further slows down the BMR. This may aggravate the problem of obesity. 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.

**Defining Obesity:** The amount of fat in the body is determined in terms of body mass index (BMI), which can be easily computed. Your BMI can be arrived at by dividing your weight in kg by the square of your height in metres (calculation needs to be modified to pounds and feet/inches). For example, if your height is 1.70 m (5'-7") and your weight is 70 kg, your BMI is  $70 \div 1.70^2 = 24.22$ . A BMI up to 23 is ideal, up to 25 is considered moderate overweight and more than 30 is considered dangerously overweight. Waist measuring over 35 inches in women and over 40 inches in men indicates a BMI of over 30.

**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 food.

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.

However, there is still more to the problem of obesity.

**Metabolism of Fat:** Our daily food consists of three major ingredients. One gram of fat contains nine calories, while carbohydrates and protein have only four calories to a gram. Also, dietary fat is easily converted into body fat. To convert one hundred calories of dietary fat into body fat, only 2.5 calories are used, while conversion of one hundred calories of carbohydrates and protein into body fat requires ten times as many calories. Hence, only one per cent of ingested carbohydrates are converted into body fat. Thus, there are two advantages to reducing fat intake. The body gets fewer calories and there is correspondingly less conversion into body fat.

**Sugar:** Sugar is present in diet in two forms: as complex carbohydrates and as simple carbohydrates; sugar in the form of complex carbohydrates is absorbed in the blood stream slowly because of the presence of fibers. Hence, blood sugar level is maintained without many ups and downs. Cereals, vegetables, fresh fruits, etc. contain complex carbohydrates with plenty of fibers, which increase the bulk and quickly give the feeling of fullness. Consequently, one does not overeat and does not feel hungry quickly. But when you eat fatty foods, you consume a large amount of calories by the time you feel that you have eaten enough.

Sugar in simple carbohydrates like sugar products, soft drinks, fruit juices and alcohol raises the blood sugar level quickly. This stimulates the secretion of insulin in the blood which brings down the blood sugar level. This again creates hunger which is satisfied by sugar. This results in a habit of eating sugar. The shorter the gap between the urge of hunger and subsequent satisfaction by sweets, the stronger the habit of eating sweets becomes. This is a vicious cycle. Thus, simple carbohydrates are the second major contributor to obesity next to fat. A diet of cereals, vegetables and fresh fruits is ideal for reducing weight. Refined wheat flour, polished rice, potato, sweet potato, etc. should be used sparingly as they contain more simple carbohydrates and fewer complex carbohydrates.

**How to increase Fiber in Your Diet:** Fiber exists in abundance in all plant-based foods. It is that part of the plant which cannot be digested. Therefore it passes through the GI tract unchanged. It does not provide energy or nutrients and yet it is of utmost importance to keep us in good health.

The soluble fiber 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. It acts as a barrier and delays absorption of carbohydrates by lowering cholesterol and triglycerides; it reduces the risk of heart disease. It also helps to lower blood pressure and promotes growth of friendly bacteria. The insoluble fiber found in wheat bran, rice bran and most cereals like jowar, bajri and naachini has a laxative effect, which promotes stool regularity, cleanses the bowels efficiently, aids elimination, and improves digestion. Because of its effect on reducing transit time of the stools, it greatly reduces the risk of colon cancer.

Foods without fiber create more hunger and one tends to eat larger quantities of such refined foods (due to lack of bulk). The convertibility into fat of fiber-stripped foods is also high. All this leads to weight gain.

Eating fiber-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.

Tips to increase fiber in one's diet:

- 1) Eat only whole grain cereals, e.g. whole wheat bread, jowar, wheat or bajri roti.
- 2) Add wheat bran to your regular wheat flour in a proportion of 1:1.
- 3) In addition to the usually consumed wheat chappatis try to consume jowar, bajri and naachini chappatis also.
- 4) Grind alsii seeds into a powder after roasting them. You can make it like dry chutney by grinding it with 2 cloves of garlic, green chilies and some salt. Have this regularly with your food. Apart from being rich in fiber, it is also very rich in Omega-3 fats.
- 5) Sprouted pulses like mung, channa, moth, masoor and choli are an excellent source of fiber.
- 6) You can also regularly take a fiber supplement like guar gum or isabgol or psyllium husk.

But make sure you take enough water for the fibers to swell.

**Salt:** 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.

**Function of Insulin:** Insulin also plays an important role in the metabolism of fat. When you consume more sugar in your diet, your blood sugar level rises; this leads to more insulin secretion from the pancreas. When there is more insulin in the blood, it increases the level of lipoprotein lipase.

Lipoprotein lipase draws fat from the blood and stores it in body cells as fat. Thus, when the level of insulin in the blood increases, more dietary fat is converted into body fat.

When you reduce the quantity of food without any change in the quality of food, your body reacts by raising the level of insulin and lipoprotein lipase. Consequently, the body draws more fat from the blood stream. This prevents the reduction of weight. Again, when the level of insulin rises, the liver increases the production of cholesterol. Moreover, insulin increases the tendency of fat deposition in the upper part of the body.

**Development during Evolution:** The human body developed mechanisms for survival during evolution. When there was a problem of getting enough food the body developed a system of storing fat for conservation of energy. Similarly, a mechanism to reduce the metabolic rate to save energy was developed. Both of these mechanisms in the present times support obesity.

Hence, when you fast or skip a meal to lose weight, your body slows down the metabolic rate. When the basal metabolic rate (BMR) is reduced, the body stops losing weight. Thus you do not succeed in your strategy for weight loss. Those who participate in repeated yo-yo dieting find their BMR set at lower point. When one stops dieting, the weight often increases at a faster rate than before.

**Isolation:** 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. Then you do not feel the need to overeat. Meditation is an antidote to isolation. It creates a feeling of oneness and heals isolation.

**Exercise:** To reduce weight, experts recommend walking at moderate pace for 30 to 40 minutes daily. The body tends to burn fat while walking at a moderate pace rather than at a fast pace. During heavy exercise the body tends to burn carbohydrates because carbohydrates burn quicker than fat. On the other hand, 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. Thus, when you are under stress or experience isolation, you benefit doubly by doing light exercise.

**Correct Way to Eat:** 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.

**Taste:** When you choose food with less fat and sugar, you need to pay adequate attention to taste. A diet should be such that it can be adopted easily and made acceptable to the whole family. It should be made tasty by using a variety of clever arts in cooking.

Nature has bestowed every object of food with unique taste and smell, which can be made tastier by adding salt and spices. Some vegetables contain natural oils. The use of non-stick utensils in cooking reduces the use of oil. Similarly, 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.

One needs to get used to new tastes by controlling one's mind. Our taste buds are renewed every 15-20 days. Our tongue therefore easily adapts to a new taste after three weeks.

**Meditation:** 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.

**Self-imposed Restraint:** 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.

### **New Scientific Approach**

- Limit the intake of fat to ten per cent of total calories to reduce excessive weight.
- Carbohydrates should account for 75 per cent of total calories.
- Simple carbohydrates are as unhealthy as fat if not more at times. Hence they should not exceed ten per cent of total carbohydrates.
- The balance of 15 per cent calories may be obtained from protein in pulses and legumes.
- Another ideal distribution of calories is: cereals 40 per cent, vegetables and fruits 40 per cent, pulses and legumes 10 per cent and skimmed milk, curds and oil 10 per cent.
- Breakfast is recommended, apart from light snacks or fresh fruit twice a day besides two main meals.
- Walk daily for 20-40 minutes at a medium pace.
- Practice meditation regularly.

It is necessary to understand an overweight individual's social, familial and psychological background to deal with the problem of obesity. 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. A weight reduction of just 2-3 kg yields appreciable relief in pain in the knees and significant improvement in a heart patient's ability to work.

## **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 while exercise is being performed, 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 was relaxed in progressive deep relaxation and the awareness was brought to the natural process of breathing, the participants experienced their Inner Self. During Shavasana when the whole body, our outer form, was relaxed, the mind automatically relaxed and became calm, as 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.

Having practiced the program for nearly seventeen years now and having the feedback from more than 10000 participants we feel that the program has a potential to contribute to the awakened doing by the human kind in the next stage of evolution of Consciousness on our planet. We are in the midst of a momentous event in the evolution of Consciousness. **Awakened doing is the alignment of your outer purpose of what you do with your inner purpose of being in this form.** Through awakened

doing Consciousness flows through you into this world; not what you do but how you do will fulfill your destiny. In any situation and in whatever you do, your state of consciousness is the primary factor. All truly successful action comes out of the field of alert attention to your state of consciousness rather than from ego and conditioned unconscious thinking. After regular practice of our program, we could see that it was easy for the participant to bring alert attention to whatever he is doing.

*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 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 done by the enormous progress of the achievements of 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.

The age old Shavasana and Meditation technique developed by the Rishis of our Vedic times has a potential to bring about this new human kind on the planet. Up till now, identification of Consciousness with the outer form was a necessary stage in the evolution of Consciousness. But now the time has come, for the new human being to emerge when more and more people will discover that their main purpose in life is to bring the light of that true form in to this world and do whatever they do as an instrument for the expression of that true form.

## 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 regenerative also. In fact, science supports the relevance of these traits and that too with empirical tests.

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.

One of the greatest needs of medical education today is to attract the students who are well rounded human beings, who will be genuinely interested in people and not merely in the diseases that affect them, who can ably comprehend reality of suffering and not just its symptoms, whose prescriptions pad will not exclude the human touch and who will take into account all the forces that exercise a downward pull on the health of their patients.

Years before students file their applications for admission to a medical school, they find themselves pushed in wrong direction. They tend to become drones rather than fully developed humans. They develop the habits of grade-grabbing that will get them into and through the medical school. This will not necessarily make them good doctors. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, was quintessentially holistic. He believed that it is natural for the human body to heal itself (medicatrix nature). He observed that physician may not always cure the disease but he should take utmost care that his approach may not interfere with the natural healing process or that might do harm to patient (Primum non Nocere). Hippocrates also said, 'Save extreme remedies for extreme diseases'. Cloud Bernard, a great medical researcher, wrote more than a century ago, "I feel convinced that there will come a day when physiologists, poets and philosophers will all speak the same language."

The structure of our body is such that a variety of external forces affects it adversely. However, human life continues to exist. This means that survival and well being of the body is a miracle of nature.

## **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 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.

## **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.

## **One Mind**

The Spindrift researchers in America conducted an amazing experiment on vegetation to prove the presence of 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, Yogananda asked himself why a rose plant should have thorns. He went to a rose plant near its 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.

## **EGO**

Dr. Dean Ornish's experience with a patient is revealing. He was advised by pass surgery after a heart attack. His angiography showed several blockages. He joined Dr. Ornish's programme 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.

## **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.

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.

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 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 UHP, that the stretching and relaxation exercises and practice of Shavasana and Meditation heal isolation and foster the sense of oneness. It is a matter of experience difficult to describe in words.

Our experience with UHP confirms that regard for above conditions enhances efficacy of any treatment.

## 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 new science – Science of Consciousness.

To keep peace and live in accordance with 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 act that we perform is an impulse of consciousness. The whole universe is the expression of Consciousness.

Shavasana and Meditation are mental techniques to experience 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 complete devotion, perseverance and regularity.

To make Yoga accessible to every one, whether he or she is a home maker, office goer, student, factory worker or an agriculturist, yoga should be viewed as being independent of an ascetic lifestyle. One can enjoy the bliss and peace of meditation without having to adopt an ascetic way of life.

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?

Recently, an important muscle from back of the chest has been transplanted on to the heart to strengthen the heart muscles. And in time, this voluntary muscle of the body begins to behave like the involuntary muscles of the heart. How do the cells mutate or change when transplanted to the heart? Biology has no satisfactory answer. However, once we accept the concept of overall Consciousness, it is obvious that body Consciousness changes the behavior and growth of individual cells.

*In a dramatic experiment by Paramhansa Yogananda, Yogananda wondered 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.*

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 human being both exist. In animal, there is only awareness of others, not awareness of itself. It is a more limited awareness. In plants the awareness is even less. In the crystal it is still less. But nevertheless it is there.

We are capable of being aware of our own thoughts and capable of focusing our awareness on anything that we may wish. Most of the time our awareness remains focused on all the affairs related to our individual self. The moment our awareness is brought to the element (The Source), which is present in all of us and in all the manifestations of the universe, the healing begins.

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 and 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 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 behaviors and we end up looking for stress remedies.

All the weight that sits on us and is crushing us by way of stress and peacelessness is the weight of a lumped up *I*. Separate the two *I*s and the weight goes. The essence of spiritualism is the separation of the actor *I* and the spectator *I* and the resultant freedom for the latter from emotional involvement in the roles of the former. That is the gift of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Yoga Sutras and all.

The Spirit is the spectator standing by the actor and watching the latter going through his roles and functions. Practicing Shavasana is training oneself to identify oneself with the spectator and to keep aloof from the actor.

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.

## **Present Moment**

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

As a species, we are obsessed with the future. But life, economics and the weather resist most of our efforts to control them.

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 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 Universal Healing Program for more than fifteen years. We have arrived at this conclusion after experiencing the calming and healthful effects of Shavasana and Meditation in all our participants of 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.*

## **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.

## **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 intercostal (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 anxiety state breathing becomes rapid and is fully intercostal. 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 favorable change in the brain wave pattern (alpha) during slow abdominal breathing.

The abdominal breathing now enjoys 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 at once 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.

## Science of Shavasana

Today science has realized its own limitations. It has reached a dead end. In the effort to break this dead end are the seeds of new science - Science of Consciousness.

To keep peace and live in accordance with natural law, we have to develop higher states of Consciousness. What is Consciousness? Consciousness is the essence of life. It is just like sap for the tree. Every word that we speak and act that we perform is an impulse of Consciousness. The whole universe is the expression of Consciousness. Since Consciousness is the most basic element of every one's life, knowledge of Consciousness is the basic necessity for every one to exist and enjoy life to the fullest.

To experience the qualities of Consciousness, we have to practice Shavasana and Meditation. 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 and its functions are regulated through a nervous system consisting of the brain, spinal cord and nerves. The nervous system has two distinct parts, one of which is under voluntary control. Most of the ordinary functions of the body like walking, and working fall under the category of voluntary control. Vital functions of the body like respiration, circulation, and digestion, are involuntary.

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

The purpose of this asana is to assume a dead-body posture. There are various techniques to perform this asana. The one adopted in the program of Dr. Dean Ornish has been evolved by late Swami Satchidanandaji of Virginia, USA. It relies on the premise that for optimum relaxation of muscles of the body, prior stretching of the muscles is necessary. Experience has shown that if relaxation is preceded by stretching, it yields optimum results. A very significant point to remember is

that while stretching a particular group of muscles, it is not correct to believe that the more the stretching, the better the relaxation. The stretching must be just enough to create a pleasant sensation. The awareness of an individual doing this exercise must be focused on the process of stretching and relaxing. The simple observation that the awareness must be brought on to the part of the body being stretched is the cardinal feature of the technique, without which the benefit of Shavasana is not complete.

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.

Moderate stretching and relaxation exercises followed by Shavasana and meditation bring about the desired relaxation with all the helpful changes, via increased secretion of endorphins, decreased formation of lactic acid and reduction in secretion of noradrenalin and adrenalin. Balance between parasympathetic and sympathetic or right and left brain will promote health. The right brain stands for intuitive instinct and the left brain for hard logic. While in relaxation mode the parasympathetic tone is more active than the sympathetic, the right brain is more active than the left, while in the stress mode the reverse occurs.

When a complete relaxation of the muscles of the body is achieved, the individual brings his awareness to the natural process of breathing. He now becomes a witness to his own breathing process without any special effort to breathe in a particular manner. It is only the natural process of inhalation and exhalation that is witnessed. This brings about relaxation and the peace of mind. When the individual's awareness gets focused on the natural process of breathing, the suggestions are given that all the muscles of the body are now relaxed, and hence the coronary arteries which are made of muscles are also relaxed. This leads to dilatation of the arteries and increase of blood flow to the heart muscles. It improves the functioning of the heart, which in turn increases the perfusion of all the cells of the body with the result that the individual feels very energetic and well.

All the advice in the management of coronary heart disease regarding hygienic measures like regular walk, giving up tobacco, moderation in use of alcohol and reduction in dietary fat and animal protein are physical measures. They do not deal with the root causes of stress like the sense of isolation, anger, hostility and fear of death.

The yogic disciplines, abdominal breathing, Shavasana and meditation, increase the inner strength of the individual and foster the feeling of connectedness bringing about a reduction in stress.

Shavasana helps you develop spiritually. It puts you right on top of the world.

**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. Do this exercise again. 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, 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, brows and the forehead. Feel the stretch. Then relax these muscles, letting the eyes close effortlessly. Do this exercise again.

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.

**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 interrelated 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 obtain a state of calm that at once refreshes the mind and 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.

Many industries use meditation to raise productivity and efficiency of their employees. Educational institutions have introduced meditation in the curriculum to increase concentration on the studies. It also makes students more disciplined and prepares them to meet the challenges of the present times.

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 more than otherwise.

By an inner mastery, it is possible to control all outer events. The realization of Soul-Force brings forth the qualities of the Soul – love, compassion and freedom from fear.

**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 distraction. 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 Om. One may not meditate immediately after meals. During meditation 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 morning and evening. The schedule should be free from stress. Meditation even for 2 to 3 minutes is also 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- 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.

## RAMANAMA AND GANDHIJI

Gandhiji's faith was not illogical. It is true that his faith often served as a beacon and his logic followed the path led by its light. Gandhiji's faith in Ramanama began with the advice by his affectionate housemaid Rambha that his fears would vanish if he chanted the name of Rama. When Gandhiji began chanting Rama's name, he had greater faith in Rambhabai than in Ramanama. But he did not even remember when the faith – induced chant moved from Rambhabai and settled on Rama.

Those who are lead by their faith and logic on a common path find that the two function so cohesively that they become inseparable. Truth for Gandhiji was a matter of faith which he had inherited. Incessant reflection on truth yielded the asset of non – violence. Truth for him, in a sense, was an end and non-violence a means. But as he went on experimenting with non-violence with an eye for truth, ends and means lost their distinction. He experienced a similar unification of truth and God. This experience led him from “God is Truth” to “Truth is God”.

Such synthesis of faith and logic gradually bring spirituality and science closer to each other and finally unify the two. The value of prayer during illness provides proof of such unity of science and spirituality. A meaning of spirituality is to recognize one element in all creatures. Doesn't science also move in the same direction by recognizing one element in all cells? Thus the paths of science and spirituality ultimately converge at the point of unity. As man begins to understand the essence of this unity, he experiences harmony with the universe. This experience can be holistic. When man experiences harmony in his consciousness, he feels its effect on physical and mental health. When man experiences harmony with others and eventually with the whole of mankind, he moves towards universal peace. When he feels harmony with the universe, he considers himself as an indivisible part of the universe.

The original meaning of the word *Sat* is existence. When Gandhiji says truth is God, he hints at the element pervading the entire universe. He uses the word Rama as a synonym for this all-pervasive element. This is an effort to present his philosophy rooted in harmony to India's common people in a popular language.

Gandhiji's field of action is entire human kind. Hence his search for harmony yields the ideology of equality of religions, removal of untouchability and elimination of class. Dr. Ramesh Kapadia's field of action is human body. Hence his search for harmony yields tools such as Meditation and Shavasana. Spirituality is his path-finder and science the engine of progress. Their achievements may vary in terms of commitment and effort. But their direction is the same.

They may be at different points on the path of progress. But both move towards the goal with faith and logical resources. Gandhiji's experiments were successful to the extent that they were people-friendly. The experiments of Dr. Kapadia and other researchers like him will prove socially useful to the extent that they are accessible to common people. Gandhiji's experience suggests that such experiments prove as successful in achievement of their goal as the purity and selflessness underlying their pursuit.

Narayan Desai.

## **What is Ramanama?**

I was invited to deliver a key note address in an all India conference of Naturopathy held in 2003 at Vardha in central India. I was amazed by the choice of key note speaker by the organizer of the conference. I said to them that I am an allopathic practitioner of cardiology and regularly prescribe medicines for the relief of ailments and am personally taking some medicines for the prevention of an illness, which has a genetic trait in our family. In spite of this explanation, they requested me to accept the invitation. During my address to the conference, I happened to mention the faith of Mahatma

Gandhi in *Ramanama* as remedy for all the illnesses. Gandhi's faith in *Ramnama* grew so intense in later years of his life that two days before his assassination, he wrote in his diary that now my faith in *Ramnama* is so real to me, that if I now die of any physical illness, consider all that I have professed up till now as false. Vinoba Bhave a saintly person, who was a disciple of Gandhi, has written a commentary on Gandhi's talks on *Ramnama*. Gandhi's faith in *Ramnama* was not in any individual *Rama*, but in Omnipresent Rama, Allah, or God. I mentioned in the conference, that sometime I would like to explain the healing potential of *Ramnama* as a scientist.

Ramanama is an all-powerful remedy for healthy longevity. Ramanama means nurturing in our heart the qualities of the Supreme Source of our existence. Living life with such feelings ensures health and yields greater success in recovering from any kind of illness.

In Gandhi's words "My Rama is eternal, he is never born. Although he is known as Sita's husband and Dasharath's son, he is all powerful God. Heart filled with His Presence all the time leads to end of all miseries. Rama means Ishwar, Allah or God. You may call Him by the name of your choice. What you need is deep faith in it. Ramanama means compassion and love for all creatures on earth. Ramanama means untiring efforts to keep equanimity in every moment of life. Practice of Cardiology for decades and experience of benefits of Universal Healing Program (UHP) has convinced me that faith in Ramanama means a feeling of oneness with entire Universe. Experience of such oneness in the depth of one's being significantly enhances the effect of any treatment and is beneficial to the receiver as well as to the provider of treatment in any system of medicine. The chances of success of any treatment by the most modern techniques increase a great deal if it is accompanied by feeling of Ramanama.

Gandhi had developed great ability to maintain equanimity in all situations in his heart while struggling against a myriad of undesirable forces. His faith in Ramanama deepened day by day. He once expressed desire to live for 120 years. He survived fatal assaults thrice during his life. The post-independence situation in India disappointed him so much that he said in despair that he no longer wished to live long. An unflinching faith in Ramanama led him to write in his diary, a day before his death, "My faith in Ramanama is so deep and real to me that if I now die of physical illness, you may regard all my teachings as blasphemy." The next day, he fell to the bullets of a mindless assassin.

The effects of Shavasana and meditation lent scientific support to Gandhiji's thoughts on the value of Ramanama on health. Health and harmony are united in a wonderful manner. I have realized this clearly as a practitioner of cardiology for years.

## **Science of Ramanama**

The founding father of allopathy 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 life ward processes keeping cells live 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 and experience happiness in the mind. And leave solution of the discord to the power of our original element and keep faith in happy results. This amounts to faith in Ramanama or the supreme power.

## **Coming of New Man**

Mankind has so far attained a distinct form of power through development of all sense organs. Having achieved the power, there is constant fear of loss or diminishing of power. To sustain and enhance this power and develop inexhaustible, fearless strength we need to concentrate on evolving inner capability superior to our equipment of senses. Time is ripe for such evolution and it appears that our species will grow with a new personality.

The mother of Pondicherry said during the final years of her life that a new human species was taking shape. This is progressively becoming clear to us. 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.

The Mother's words uttered at the end of the nineteenth century are supported by modern science. Such a development is indeed possible. This development will be founded on the forces of love, mercy, compassion and mutual trust. Human beings will enjoy an exhilarating long life. We will thus see the manifestation of the strength of the basic element binding us all.

The power which until now was borne from era to era by sages and exceptional men from Christ to Gandhi will now be visible in common people. It will not be limited to exceptional persons.

In our journey, if we want the original element to be manifested in our external life, that is 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 pre occupied with discord. Our mind is normally busy in discriminating between right and wrong among the events around us. The time we spend on matters of discord draws us away from the original element.

Every cell of our body is made out of an immortal element. The power of that element is geared to maintenance and growth of the cells. The power of the element is weakened by the shadows of various feelings like fear, despair, grief, selfishness, enmity etc. During experiences of trouble, if we remember the original element and faithfully believe in its ability to remove the shadows of feelings, the inner capacity of our cells to heal may get activated. This may make any treatment more successful and ensure health. The main condition for such achievement is to nurture our mind with feelings of unity and harmony.

The universe is a manifestation of an endless, everlasting and immortal element. Human life is the noblest part of the process of evolution so far. Philosophers have paid attention to the sense of emptiness we experience after the progress made in ensuring security and fullness for mankind. Saints and thinkers have been talking about developing qualities of the heart, but the common man has been always concentrated on developing external qualities and chase happiness and wealth. It was difficult for the common man to comprehend the insights gained by saints. But the sense knowledge that nurtures the growth of external qualities points the way to the growth of qualities of the heart. We should ensure that the progress achieved so far does not fail due to our inability to develop qualities of the heart. Vinobaji used to say that a day will come when the wisdom of saints and scriptures will be validated on the table of modern science and it will reach the common man. It will be useful in day to

day existence and human beings will be ready to develop qualities of the heart. This will be an extremely happy and blissful event. The qualities of heart imply development of feelings of equality and unity and harmony in heart and mind.

Contemporary time is to establish supremacy of our original element in all our activities. This will make it a golden age. As a Cardiac physician and in view of my thoughts on the success of UHP I have come to the conclusion that the techniques of Shavasana and meditation preached by sages is an effective means for the experience of the original element.

Feeling of discord in our sentiments obstructs the full growth of the qualities of Supreme Entity in our life. If we dispel discord and bring harmony, all the beneficial powers of the original element will manifest in our life and we can lead a life of healthy longevity. We are all one at one level, although we appear distinctly different. If this sentiment grows in the whole mankind, a new age will begin. Shavasana and Meditation are a handy tool to develop a sense of oneness and facilitate the birth of a new age- a new man.

## Frequently asked questions

### **Q: 1. What is the proper diet for patients of coronary heart disease?**

**A:** In an average Indian diet, the fat content is about 30 – 40% of the total calories. Recommended fat intake for a heart disease patient is less than 10%. The diet recommended is purely vegetarian. It should be rich in complex carbohydrates and vegetable proteins, like grains, pulses, lentils, fresh green vegetables and season's fruits. However, intake of simple carbohydrates and excessive use of salt should be limited. Simple carbohydrates include refined sugar, jaggery, polished rice, preparations of rice (puffed rice, and poha), soft drinks, fruit juices, honey and sugarcane juice.

### **Q: 2. What type of symptoms should prompt one to seek immediate medical help to prevent a Heart Attack?**

**A:** If you experience discomfort in the chest, like a feeling of tightness or severe pain, which may or may not radiate to either of the arms, with or without a choking sensation in the throat or any unusual feeling of distress in the chest, you should immediately call for an ambulance to get your pain evaluated in a nearby hospital. This is important if you are prone to coronary heart disease because of strong family history, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol or a habit of smoking. If the pain is diagnosed as acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) or unstable angina, then angiography followed by angioplasty or bypass surgery is necessary. One 325 mg tablet of Aspirin (to be avoided if there is known allergy to aspirin) dissolved in water should be taken immediately. Four to eight pills of 75 mg of Clopidogrel may be taken with a glass of water and a Sorbitrate can be taken under the tongue if there is delay in getting emergent medical help.

### **Q: 3. I get angina pains and I am afraid it may result in a fatal heart attack. What is chronic angina and what is unstable angina?**

**A:** Chronic angina is an experience of discomfort and pain in the chest, which comes with predictable exertion like walking with a particular pace, walking immediately after heavy meals, climbing high stairs or during a burst of anger. Chronic angina is typically relieved by rest. In a large majority of patients with chronic angina and normal ejection fraction of the left ventricle, conservative medical management is all that is required. Chronic angina rarely leads to a fatal outcome. As long as the frequency and duration of angina is stable, there is no need to be alarmed. Chronic stable angina is frequently associated with establishment of collateral circulation. One should not fear death or heart attack with every episode of stable angina. Fear leads to the narrowing of coronary arteries and an increase in the viscosity of blood which may aggravate angina. Regular practice of Shavasana and Meditation helps to overcome the fear of death.

Unstable angina is an angina which comes during rest or with minimal exertion and is not always relieved by rest. Changing patterns of angina i.e. angina becoming more frequent, with lesser exertion

etc. is also a sign of unstable angina. Although sublingual nitroglycerine may relieve angina it is only partial relief or the angina occurs again compelling further use of sublingual nitrate. Such an episode of angina calls for immediate medical or surgical intervention to prevent heart attack.

**Q: 4. Is angiography necessary to diagnose coronary heart disease?**

**A:** A carefully taken history, ECG, exercise treadmill test and at times 2D ECHO are enough to diagnose that the patient has diminished coronary circulation because of narrowing of the coronary arteries due to atherosclerosis.

Coronary angiography is usually advised only when the clinical condition of the patient is such that he requires intervention by angioplasty or bypass surgery.

**Q: 5. When should one go for angiography and angioplasty or by-pass surgery?**

**A:** In a large majority of patients with chronic angina and normal ejection fraction of the left ventricle, conservative medical management is all that is required. Bypass surgery or stenting is unlikely to prolong survival in this situation.

Angioplasty or by-pass surgery may prove to be beneficial to the patient of incapacitating angina and diminished left ventricular ejection fraction. Even for such patients, if they want to avoid surgery or stenting for some reason, intensive medical management including lipid-lowering medications aiming to lower LDL cholesterol to less than 70 mg/dl, in-depth stress management and other risk factor modification will help.

**Q: 6. Is it true that a heart attack is likely to occur any moment if coronary artery is more than 70% blocked?**

**A:** It is important to realize that a severe heart attack does not occur commonly because of an artery which is already more than 70% blocked. The heart attack occurs more frequently in the artery which is less than 60% blocked. This may be explained to some extent by the fact that there are many areas of the arteries which have less than 60% blockage compared to areas with more than 70% blockage. When a heart attack occurs, the affected artery gets 100% blocked. Many times even if the artery gets 100% blocked, it happens slowly enough so that there is chance to develop collateral circulation and hence there is no heart attack. Once the artery is already 100% blocked, there is no risk of heart attack happening from that artery. **On a routine check up even if all the three arteries are severely blocked and the ejection fraction of the left ventricle is normal, mostly medical management with risk factor modification may be sufficient.** The fact that the ejection fraction is normal in spite of blockages in arteries shows that there is sufficient collateral circulation available to the heart muscle. In other words, natural bypass may have already taken place.

**Q: 7. There is a common belief that blockages in the arteries cannot be reversed. Is the reversal of blockages at all possible?**

**A:** Life-style changes and treatment of high cholesterol by appropriate treatment aiming to bring the LDL cholesterol below 70mgm will halt the progress of narrowing of the arteries due to atherosclerosis and will result in reversal of blockages. Heavily calcified blockages are slow to reverse. However, most blockages get naturally bypassed through collateral circulation. Regular moderate exercise, maintenance of normal weight, normal BP, normal postprandial blood sugar will increase collateral circulation.

**Q: 8. Is Universal Healing Program an alternative to modern medical therapy of coronary artery disease?**

**A:** No. It does not replace modern medical therapy. It complements the mainstream approach and enhances the benefits of medications and interventions. It helps to achieve risk factor modification and life style changes essential for better long-term outcome in patients with coronary artery disease. In other words, it helps patients needing conservative or invasive treatment.

**Q: 9. What made you introduce UHP in your practice?**

**A:** While treating coronary heart disease patients and advising them to make lifestyle changes, like giving up smoking, giving up excessive use of alcohol, and losing weight, we felt that patients change

their lifestyle out of fear of the disease, whereas practice of Universal Healing Program empowers them to change their lifestyle without a sense of deprivation and reduces the fear of disease. All studies related to coronary heart disease done to date have shown conclusively that beta-blockers which reduce sympathetic activity are helpful in preventing heart attack. Beta-blockers only partially neutralize the harmful effects of increased mental & physical stress. UHP appears to be a beta-blocker par excellence. It helps to control all the harmful effects of stress and helps the therapeutic measures to prevent plaque rupture and plaque stabilization. It heals isolation, reduces hostility, self-centeredness and cynicism - proven toxins to the heart and body as a whole. The program provides a successful cost- effective integral approach to management of coronary heart disease.

**Q: 10. In what way does the practice of Shavasana and Meditation help the coronary heart disease patient?**

**A:** Regular practice of Shavasana and Meditation helps the patient to experience his SOUL FORCE by quieting outer activities of mind and body. The SOUL FORCE is common to all living creatures. This experience increases the inner strength of individual to change his lifestyle and face the stresses of life with equanimity.

**Q: 11. What are the guidelines for prevention of heart attack?**

**A:** Maintain normal weight. Follow regular moderate exercise like walking on a level surface for 40 minutes daily or at least 5 times in a week. Avoid tobacco in any form. Avoid unaccustomed heavy exertion immediately after meals. Keep blood pressure below 130 / 80, blood sugar 2 hours after meals below 140 mgm, total cholesterol below 150 mgm, HDL cholesterol above 45 mgm and LDL cholesterol below 70 mgm and triglycerides below 140 mgm. People with a strong family history of coronary heart disease should have a ratio of total cholesterol to HDL below 4 and a ratio of LDL to HDL below 2. Regular practice of Shavasana and Meditation is a proven antidote for the harmful effects of physical and mental stress.

**Q: 12. What will be your advice for healthy long life?**

**A:** Nutritious diet, pure drinking water and sunlight are important for our health. However equally important, or perhaps more vital, is to have the feeling of harmony in our mind. Harmony is the quality of Soul, which is the Source of our existence common to all of us. Discord is the quality of our mind. In our varied existence, it is natural that harmony is disturbed very often. Our health depends upon how soon we establish the feeling of harmony once again. Practice of Shavasana and Meditation by relaxing the body and calming the mind makes one experience the inner oneness of our existence and thus helps to re-establish harmony.

**Q: 13. Very often there is difference of opinion regarding management of CAD. One doctor advises conservative approach and the other advises intervention. This causes great confusion. What would you suggest to solve this problem?**

**A:** As the last word is not yet written regarding the treatment of coronary artery disease, such difference of opinions may occur. More than one opinion is helpful and is encouraged in many situations. Unbiased opinion from a clinical cardiologist may be helpful to resolve the confusion. The whole issue is very complex. A decision for or against intervention depends upon a variety of factors and circumstances.

**Q: 14. What in your opinion is crucial in bringing about a successful outcome in treatment of coronary heart disease?**

**A:** Three conditions vital to the curing of any disease are:

1. The doctor's faith in himself to cure his patient.
2. The patient's faith in his doctor that he will cure him.
3. The doctor's Karma - his skill and its application with love.

The doctor's only source of income is the patient. However when he examines the patient, he should not see him only as a source of income. If he listens to the patient with empathy and concern for his suffering, treatment becomes more effective.

**Q: 15. What are the components of Universal Healing Program?**

**A:** In addition to mainstream medical treatment,

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 an emphasis on the sharing of feelings.

The Program increases the inner strength of the participant to make the life style changes and also helps to overcome the fear of disease.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT to be revised

The Universal Healing Program was born on October 2, 1991, Gandhiji's birthday. In the subsequent journey, I experienced the realization of the dream of New Man by Sri Aurobindo and Mataji. The purpose of our life on earth is spiritual growth. The truth behind Swami Vivekanand's belief, that the sole purpose of human life is to experience divinity in ourselves, began to be clear. I had the distinct fortune of treating an eminent Gandhian, Shri Narayana Desai, son of Mahadev Desai who was personal secretary to Mahatma Gandhi. A series of such experiences led me to contemplate on importance of Ramanama in integral approach to healing.