



*Hope this Meets You
— in Good Health —*

The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry

Issue No.9 / 2003

Message from the Minister

Message from the Minister

THE HEALTH AND Welfare Ministry is making gradual progress due to the assistance of many talented and dedicated devotees. The newsletter's editorial office is now in ISKCON Radhadesh in Belgium and Tattvavit Dasa, Rupa Sanatana Dasa, Kancana-vali Devi Dasi, and Yadurani Devi Dasi are assisting in all aspects of the editing, proof-reading and layout. Devotees such as Ram Prasad and his wife Raga-manjari Devi Dasi continue to submit articles to the magazine as well as assist the devotees in their health care in Australia. We welcome the articles that Nimai Nitai Dasa, from Boston, has submitted.

Dr Liladhara Gupta, a graduate from Ayurvedic medical college whose father has treated devotees for many decades, is traveling extensively around the world educating the devotees in preventative health care practices. Many Ayurvedic doctors, such as Sri Krsna Caitanya Dasa along with his staff at the Bhaktivedanta Hospital, assist the devotees around the world in their health care.

In North America, Samik Rsi Dasa promises to help to organize the many devotees who are professionals in the health care field. In Russia, many devotees are publishing books and articles on health, as well as setting up institutes for training devotees in different health fields.

Many other devotees are doing significant service in the gradual development of education, treatment and care for the needs of ISKCON members in the fields of health and welfare. Although I couldn't mention them all, I would like to thank them.

— *Prahladananda Swami*

Subscriptions

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Disclaimer

- The articles in this magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the Health and Welfare Ministry.
- This magazine is not intended to treat, diagnose or prescribe.
- The information contained herein is in no way to be considered as a substitute for consultation with a duly licensed health-care professional.

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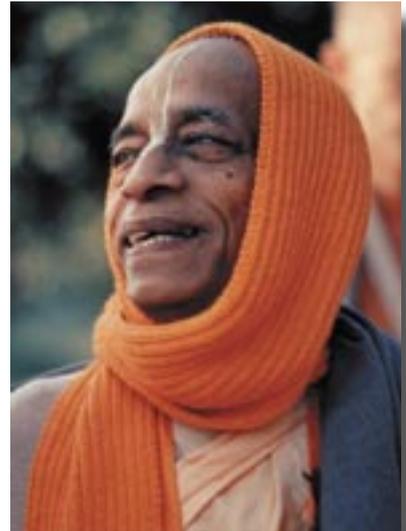
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Contributions are welcome for upcoming newsletters.

Quotes from the Previous Acaryas



Srila Prabhupada on health

Make the best use of a bad bargain

Dr Wolfe: Can one say that the soul and life are identical?

Prabhupada: Yes. Identical. Life is the symptom of the soul. Because the soul is there, therefore life is there. And as soon the soul is not there, there is no more life. There is sun in the sky, and the light is there, sunshine. When the sun is set, there is no more light; it is dark.

Dr Pore: Is the body, then, to be resisted? Is the body to be disciplined, to be resisted, to be ignored? Is that what you're suggesting?

Prabhupada: Ignored?

Dr Pore: How do you treat the body?

Prabhupada: Make the best use of a bad bargain [laughter]. It is a bad bargain. But we have to utilize it.

Dr Pore: When you say, then, that everything is a part of God, you make an exception of the body, the body is not.

Prabhupada: No, why? Body is also part. That I explained.

Dr Judah: *Maya-sakti*.

Prabhupada: Yes, it is another energy.

Dr Pore: Oh, I see.

Dr Judah: The inferior energy of Krishna.

Prabhupada: Everything is God's energy, so the body is also God's energy. So best use of the body is God's energy should be utilized for God. Then the body is spiritualized. The body is also

God's energy, and when it is utilized in God's service, it is no longer a bad bargain, it is a good bargain.

— Garden conversation with professors
June 24, 1975, Los Angeles

You must take care of your health

Prabhupada: Why everyone is coughing? What is the difficulty? Yesterday also I heard. What is the difficulty?

Devotee: I think there's a cold going around.

Prabhupada: But you have no sufficient warm cloth, so you are affected. That you must arrange. You must take care of your health. In the *Bhagavad-gita* it is said, *yuktahara*: you should take food just to maintain your health nicely. Similarly, other necessities of body must be taken care of. If you become diseased, then you can execute Krishna consciousness? Just like Brahmananda could not go today. So we must be careful. Better eat less than eat more. You'll not die by eating less. But you may die eating more. People die for over-eating, not for under-eating. This should be the principle. Medical science always forbids eating more than you require. Voracious eating is the cause of diabetes, and under-nourishment is the cause of tuberculosis. This is the medical science. So we should not take under, neither

more. Children can commit the mistake of taking more, but adults, they cannot commit. Children can digest. All day they are playing. So, anyway, we should take care of our health also. Sanatana Goswami was suffering from itching very much, and Caitanya Mahaprabhu was embracing him. So these were wet itches. After itching, they became wet. So Sanatana's body was all covered with wet itches, and the moisture was sticking to the body of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So he felt very much ashamed. And he decided, "Tomorrow I shall commit suicide instead of allowing myself to be embraced by Caitanya Mahaprabhu." So the next day Caitanya Mahaprabhu inquired, "You have decided to commit suicide? So do you think this body is yours? You have already dedicated this body to Me. How you can kill it?" Of course, from that day, his itches were all cured. But this is the decision, that our body, those who are Krishna conscious, those who are working for Krishna, they should not think that the body belongs to them. It is already dedicated to Krishna. So it must be kept very carefully, without any neglect. Just like you are taking care of the temple because it is Krishna's place. We should not be over careful, but some care we should take so that we may not fall diseased.

— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class 1.8.37,
April 29, 1973, Los Angeles

AYURVEDA

AS IT IS

Suddha Ayurveda in the lineage of the Bhagavata *kavirajas*

Kaviraja Nimai Nitai Dasa



*sreyas ca preyas ca manusyametastau
samparitya vivinakti dhirah
sreya hi dhiro 'bhipreyaso vrnite
preyo mando yogaksemad vrnite*

We can accept either that which is immediately appealing (preyas) or that which is permanently beneficial (sreyas). The wise, after careful consideration, accept that which is enduringly salutary, whereas those whose judgment is poor prefer fleeting gain and pleasure .

— Katha Upanisad 1.2.2

PREYAS IS THAT which is pleasant to the senses and instantly agreeable to the mind, but what is enjoyed in this way satisfies only our lower nature and does not lead ultimately to our eternal welfare. *Sreyas* leads to our ultimate good, even if it is momentarily unpleasant and difficult for the mind to accept. In the following pages we will discuss some principles of Ayurveda, holding firmly to *sreyas*.

The sole purpose of this article is to promote a better understanding of Ayurveda; it is not meant to secure profit or to cultivate a following. Both would be achieved with greater ease by catering to the deceptive distortions that abound in today's

Ayurvedic marketplace. Our practice of Ayurveda has been provided without charge since 1982, and we neither sell nor endorse products for profit. We are simply attempting to obey the following instruction of our superiors:

*ayurvedena bhakta-sevanam kuru
ayurvedena abhaktebhyo pracaranam kuru*

“Serve the devotees and edify the non-devotees through Ayurveda.”

In observing this concise injunction on the internal purpose of Ayurveda, we are striving to present in clear terms the con-

fidential teachings of the Bhagavata lineage, known as *suddha* (pure) Ayurveda. According to the Bhagavata *kavirajas* (*suddha* practitioners), the ultimate goal of Ayurveda is not to preserve or restore health, but rather to facilitate *bhakti-yoga sadhana*, the discipline of spiritual cultivation.

Anyone familiar with the Vedic *purusarthas* [duty (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kama*), liberation from material suffering (*moksa*), and pure love of God (*prema*)] understands that health is a means to attain those ends, and not a goal in and of itself. It is a fact that, despite the irresponsible propaganda of certain purveyors of commercialized Ayurveda, there is no such thing as “perfect health and immortality.” All embodied beings are subject to birth, death, disease, and old age. No one is exempt; the morbidity and mortality rates are eventually exactly cent percent.

Why then bother with Ayurveda? We learn and practice this sacred health science in order to facilitate and support spiritual practice of the devotees, and to instruct those who are not yet practitioners about the ultimate goal of life and the futility of striving for that which is unattainable.

Some of our readers, unfamiliar with our lineage but steeped in the serious study and practice of Ayurveda, will immediately recognize the soundness of the principles of *suddha* Ayurveda and the correctness of its praxis. You are welcome then, if you so choose, to adopt a terminology and a discourse that is more pertinent to what you have intuited by the merit of your sincerity.

However, some readers might object that we seem uncompromising and exclusive, and we readily admit to such charges. In the search for the highest goal (*paramartha*) of Vedic culture, i.e. *prema*, we must be committed to pursue truth wherever truth will lead us. Relativism is not the Vedic standard of truth. On the contrary, the Vedas are categorical and unambiguous in their conclusion (*siddhanta*), even if motivated commentators choose to misinterpret the obvious. Lord Krishna states in *Bhagavad-gita*, precisely defining the origin and goal of all true knowledge:

*sarvasya caham hr̥di sannivisto
mattah smrtir jnanam apohanam ca
vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyo
vedanta-krd veda-vid eva caham*

“I am situated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the Vedas I am to be known. Indeed I am the compiler of Vedanta, and the knower of the Vedas.” (Bg. 15.15)

How can we approach the truth?

All the *acaryas* (authorized preceptors) have concluded that *pramana* (evidence to determine truth) consists of: direct perception (*pratyaksa*), inference (*anumana*), and the four Vedas, Upanisads, *Vedanta-sutra*, and *Bhagavad-gita* (*sastra*). Of these, only *sastra* is ultimately reliable, as both direct perception and inference are compromised by the four defects to which every

human is subject: confusion (*bhrama*), inattention (*pramada*), deception (*vipralipsa*), and impaired perception (*karanapata-va*). A detailed discussion of these four defects would occupy much of the allotted space for this article, and thus we must rely on the candor of the reader to acknowledge that such is the lot of embodied souls.

Scripture, then, is the only dependable evidence. But even scripture is susceptible to misinterpretation, and we may argue unendingly about the meaning of any scriptural passage. *Vedanta sutra* (2.1.11) declares, *tarkapratisthanat*, “Logical reasoning is inconclusive.” The *Katha* (1.2.23) and *Mundaka* (3.2.3) *Upanisads* therefore state: *nayam atma pravacanena labhyo na medhaya na bahuna srutena* — “The truth can only be known by one to whom the truth chooses to reveal itself, not by erudition, nor study of many texts.”

The *Mundaka Upanisad* (1.2.12) recommends: *tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet samit-panih srotriyam brahmanistham* — “To understand everything properly, one must humbly approach a preceptor who is learned in the Vedas and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth.” And the *Katha Upanisad* (2.9) declares: *naisa tarkena matir apaneya proktanyenaiva sujnanaya prestha* — “Realization cannot be acquired by logic. It must be spoken by an exceptionally qualified preceptor to a knowledgeable disciple.”

Therefore one who would know the import of Vedic knowledge needs to be connected through a legitimate authorized lineage (*sampradaya*) to Sri Krishna, the original compiler of Vedanta and knower of the Vedas. Only then all *upavedas*, like Ayurveda, can be understood; otherwise, it is not possible. Mere erudition in a field of Vedic study, without that connection, is useless—like attempting to operate an electrical appliance in a house without electric power. Thus the science of Ayurveda should not be imparted and received via modern classroom education but via the *tola* system of apprenticeship under a qualified *kaviraja*.

This *tola* system is an intrinsic aspect of Ayurveda. Unfortunately, even in India, since the advent of the republic, the *tolas* are in decline. The heroic efforts of Kaviraja Gangadhara Raya of Magura (Bengal), preserved traditional Ayurvedic education in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Ayurveda renaissance

Gangaprasad and Gangadhara Raya were the undisputed leaders of the Ayurveda renaissance in Bengal during the critical decades after 1835, which led directly to the establishment of new *tolas* and the preservation of the apprenticeship system. (One can read further about the *suddha* movement in Charles Leslie’s *Ambiguities of Medical Revivalism in Modern India* and Brahmananda Gupta’s *Indigenous Medicine in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Bengal*.) Lamentably, the national enthusiasm for the study and practice of Ayurveda generated by the *suddha* movement eventually led to the development of government-sponsored institutions that integrated the study and practice of Ayurveda and western conventional medicine.



The republic appointed committees dominated by allopathic doctors to determine the course of Ayurvedic education in India. The traditional *kavirajas* of Bengal resisted this strategy under the leadership of Shyamadasa Vacaspati and his son, Vimalananda Tarkatirtha. However, the institutionalization of *misra* (mixed or corrupted) Ayurveda rode the tide of national education plans after 1947, and it is precisely this *misra* Ayurveda that has made its way to Europe and America.

Is Ayurveda “alternative or complementary”?

Ayurveda, the science of life, is believed to be the oldest extant health care system in continuous use. It gave birth to the Tibetan, Chinese, Greek, and Arabic medical systems. Ayurveda is the time-tested, effective health care system preferred and used today by millions upon millions in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and other central and east Asian countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) has endorsed Ayurveda as a viable and cost-effective alternative for the developing world. It is the fastest growing “alternative and complementary” health care practice in Europe and America.

But Ayurveda is neither “complementary” nor “alternative.” Those who have made a serious and honest study of Ayurveda know that its principles do not complement conventional western medicine, but rather contradict and refute it conclusively.

Ayurveda is a philosophical system, deriving its practices from immutable principles. Conventional western medicine is proud to call itself empirical, always eager to adopt the latest “new and improved therapeutic modality.”

Ayurveda regards the patient as an embodied spiritual entity within the context of family, community, and country. Conventional medicine reduces the patient to a set of systems, organs, cells, and secretions that interact with each other according to physio-chemical laws.

In its application, Ayurveda pays strict attention to *desa-kala-patra* (specifics of place, time, and recipient). Conventional medicine is bent on developing generalizations and standardized protocols for treating the most disparate patients.

Should these three fundamental differences in nature, object, and practice not suffice to dispel the myth of complementarity, there are countless other irreconcilable differences between the paradigms that inform these approaches to health and healing.

Ayurveda is also not “alternative”—a term that implies option, choice, or selection. Earnest scientific endeavor is incompatible with such a cavalier attitude toward biology. Ayurveda makes a bold and rightful claim to be original, eternal, and perfect, and it can have no commerce with that which is ever evolving, impermanent, and intrinsically flawed. We do not accept these claims ignorantly or blindly, but are guided and safeguarded from error by *guru*, *sadhu*, and *sastra* (preceptors, saints, and scriptures). We make no claims that cannot be corroborated by anyone willing to make a sincere effort to apply this science.

Adopting various incompatible modalities of health care is a sign of not understanding, or not caring to understand, the principles that inform such modalities, nor the inherent dangers of eclecticism. In crossing a river, there may be so many boats that can take one safely to the other bank. However, one cannot travel with the right foot in one boat and the left in another, nor can one jump from boat to boat in midstream, and expect to make it safely across. Similarly, when there is a fire, it is not in our best interest to endlessly change buckets to throw water on it. This vacillation, this lust for change and lack of stability, illustrates the fundamental disease of material existence, and particularly a western mindset that craves variety at the expense of realization.

Ayurveda is a *system* of health care, not a modality to be offered conjointly with other so-called holistic therapies arising out of

mutually exclusive and incompatible philosophies. Either we practice what scripture and the experience of our preceptors have demonstrated to be biologically consonant modes of promoting health and supporting healing, or we reject them as false and useless.

The following paragraphs will briefly deal with the Ayurvedic conception of health, disease, and health care. Based on this information our readers may then judge if the *suddha* conception should stand alone, or be alloyed with others. If judged false or insufficient, it should be rightly discarded; if true, it demands to be adopted without compromise.

What is health?

Suddha Ayurveda understands health (*svasthya*) as inherent equilibrium (*sahaja satmya*) of the flow system, i.e. the human organism. The human organism is perceived and described as a flow system because it consists of diverse systems of flow channels (*srotas*). The influence of false ego (*ahankara*), the verdicts of intellect (*buddhi*), the reactions of mind (*manas*), the invigoration of life-force (*prana*), the perceptions of organs of knowledge (*jnanendriyas*), the impulses of organs of action (*karmendriyas*), the efficacy of the thirteen biothermic potentials (*agnis*), the nourishment and purification of the seven tissues (*dhatu*s), the replenishment of residual essence (*ojas*), the distribution of the three *doshas* (biological principles), and the elimination of the three excretions (*malas*) must flow unimpeded.

Because our inherent equilibrium rests on the *tristambha* (three pillars) of life-force, biothermic potential, and residual essence, *suddha* Ayurveda practitioners strive to protect *prana* (*pranoraksanam*), regulate *agni* (*agnividhanam*), and cultivate *ojas* (*ojonmatisadhanam*), both in health and in disease. *Prana*, *agni*, and *ojas* are supported in turn by the three sustaining pillars (*upastambhas*) of: (1) *vihara* (wholesome habits), (2) *ahara* (balanced nutrition), and (3) *sadacara* (salutary conduct).

Suddha practitioners counsel and encourage their patients to

monitor and enhance the quality of the three pillars of life-force (*tristambha*) by adopting lifelong salutary habits of nutrition, exercise, and rest, instead of focusing obsessively on the condition of the *tridosha* (literally, three defects: *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*), which are the waste products of *prana*, *agni*, and *ojas*.

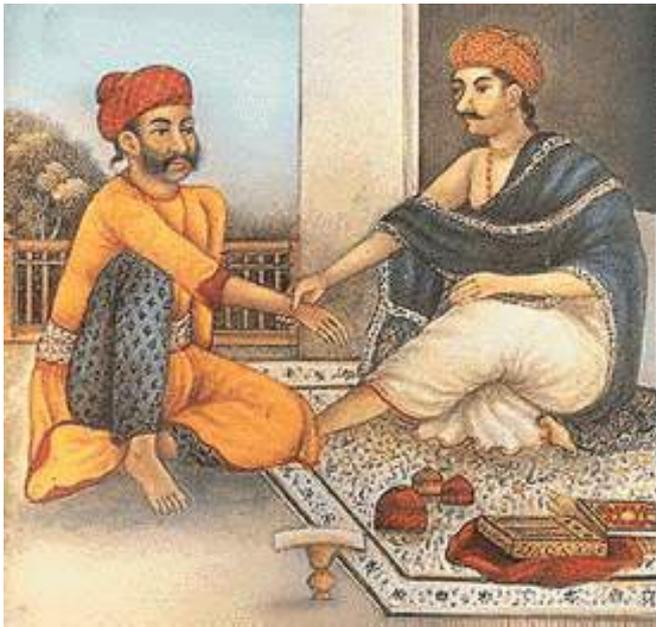
What is disease?

Disease is inevitable for embodied beings. It is a state of dynamic imbalance, brought about by: volitional transgression (*prajnaparadha*), unsuitable contact of sense organs with their objects (*asatmya indriyarthas*), and changes in the external environment due to the passage of time (*parinama*). These causes lead to: accumulation (*sancaya*), aggravation (*prakopa*), and displacement (*prasara*) of *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*. If not checked, the disease process will advance to: *sthana-samsraya* (deposition), *vyakti* (manifestation), and *bheda* (complication). The first three are known in *suddha* Ayurveda as the doshic accumulation stages (*doshavrdhi kriyakala*), while the last three are known as stages of association of deranged *dosha* and tissue (*dosha-dushya sammurcana kriyakala*).

Suddha practitioners pay much attention to the *yantra* (matrix) formed by the six stages of disease (on the horizontal axis) and the seven *dhatu*s (on the vertical axis). With the *vyadhi kriyakalas* arranged from left to right (from accumulation to complication), and the *dhatu*s arranged from top to bottom (from *rasa* to *sukra*), one can easily trace the course of a patient's healing by following the process from right to left (away from complication) and from bottom to top (away from more internal and vital tissues). Conversely, if the movement is from left to right (toward complication) and from top to bottom (toward more vital tissues), the disease is progressing, and the treatment is ineffective.

A major difference between *suddha* and *misra* practitioners resides in the propensity of the latter to view symptoms as aspects of disease, and symptom complexes as discrete disease entities. *Suddha* practitioners understand symptoms as the expression of a biologically appropriate reaction against

↓ tissue	→ stage of illness	<i>sancaya</i> (accumulation)	<i>prakopa</i> (aggravation)	<i>prasara</i> (displacement)	<i>sthana-samsraya</i> (deposition)	<i>vyakti</i> (manifestation)	<i>bheda</i> (complication)
Rasa (lymph)	>				Disease >		
Rakta (blood)	Better	>					
Mamsa (fat)	<			>			
Medha (muscle)		<			>		
Asthi (bone)				<		>	
Majja (marrow)					<		>
Sukra (reproductive fluid)				< Health		<	Worse



doshavrdhi in the first three stages of disease, and an attempt to compensate for the harmful effects of *dosha-dushya sam-murcana* in the final three stages. *Kavirajas* recognize only dynamic disorders, and never disease entities. Others who accept reification of the abstraction called disease inevitably seek to do battle with those fictitious entities, the symptoms of disease, and ravage the battlefield—the mind and body of the patient—in the process.

Because symptoms are the expression of the attempt of ego and intellect to restore inherent equilibrium (*sahaja satmya*) by means of *prana*, *agni*, and *ojas*, *suddha* practitioners scrupulously avoid suppression of these efforts, which ultimately lead to disease progression (from left to right and from top to bottom in the *vyadhi kriyakala-dhatu yantra*).

Treatment of disease in *suddha* Ayurveda consists of: increasing *sattva* and reducing *rajas* and *tamas* in the mind (*satvavajaya*), avoidance of causes and aggravating factors (*nidana parivarjana*), prescription of diet and activity (*pathya vyavastha*), purification (*sodhana*), normalization (*samana*), and therapeutic nutrition (*rasayana*). Although *suddha* practitioners know *pancakarma*, they are seldom used, as these five drastic elimination procedures frequently exhaust *prana*, weaken *agni*, and deplete *ojas*—the very pillars of inherent equilibrium. Any physician who has practiced *pancakarma* extensively has realized the truth of this statement.

What are the qualities of a genuine health care system?

When we set out to introduce *suddha* Ayurveda to our readers, we promised to address three fundamental questions: what is health, what is disease, and what is health care? We have briefly explained the *suddha* conceptions of health and disease,

and have given some indication of the approach that *suddha* practitioners take towards the healing process. We shall now describe the *suddha* conception of a genuine and useful health care system.

First, as we have already explained, a genuine system must not be concocted. Rather, it must be transmitted in disciplic succession within a legitimate lineage. Second, it must be consonant with the totality of Vedic culture, and facilitate the attainment of the ultimate goal of life. Third, it must be relevant, coherent, and practical. Its principles should inform each and every one of its practices, and its practices should not violate its principles. It must be based on appropriate technology, and require simple means for its application. Such a system must be universally valid, because it can be adapted locally to conform to the needs and situations of specific communities and persons. Furthermore, it cannot be partial to one species—the human—at the expense of other species, or the environment. Finally, it must meet all the necessities of life, in health as in disease, because we are not one person when healthy and another when ill. We require the same positive, health building support in all conditions of existence, for what is noxious in health must be more so in disease.

Such a system exists, and has existed eternally. Revealed at the dawn of time, Ayurveda is that system, and its pure (*suddha*) expression is transmitted faithfully through the *parampara* system of disciplic succession. *Suddha* Ayurveda is that *sastra*-based, separate and distinct system of health care incorporating the disciplines of: health promotion (*svasthavrtta*), psychotherapy (*sattvavajaya*), salutary conduct (*sadacara*), and medicine (*cikitsa*).

Although the west is currently obsessed with Ayurvedic medicine, *cikitsa* (medicine) is but a part of *suddha* Ayurveda, and although capable of great remedial action, it is to be employed only as a last resort, after thorough application of public health measures to promote and protect the health of the community; systematic application of psychotherapy to increase *sattva* (lucidity) and decrease *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (inertia); and individualized prescription and adoption of diurnal (*dinacarya*), nocturnal (*ratricarya*), seasonal (*rtucarya*), social (*varnadharma*) and developmental (*asrama-dharma*) disciplines of salutary conduct.

In future articles, we will explore these and other salient aspects of *suddha* Ayurveda in greater detail.

om namoh bhagavate dhanvantaraye

Nimai Nitai Dasa is a disciple of Niranjana Maharaja. He has studied and practiced Ayurveda for over two decades, and is assistant clinical professor of family medicine and community health at Tufts University School of Medicine. He can be reached at sevasrama@attbi.com

CAFFEINE

grounds for concern?

Dr Chris Fenn

Caffeine — the energy drainer

Do you enjoy an occasional espresso with the after dinner mints? Or do you make a more regular contribution to the 2.5 billion cups of coffee drunk each day? It peeps you up, lures you out of bed and helps you face the day ahead. The rich aroma and flavor are welcoming and familiar. So what's wrong with your coffee habit? How about low energy, extra stress, mineral depletion, exhausted adrenal glands, indigestion, anxiety and mood swings?

If this sounds like you, it may be time to re-think your habit and discover that caffeine, the very substance you believed was keeping you going, is actually draining your energy! Black coffee has a zero calorie count, so it can't provide energy—although you may think you feel energized. Caffeine is known as a psycho-stimulant because it works directly on the brain. It improves reaction time and concentration, giving the feeling of alertness and increased energy. It does this by blocking the action of adenosine, another psychoactive chemical. It is a chemical which is found throughout the body and is an important regulator of energy metabolism.

Adenosine is also involved in the transmission of electrical impulses along nerves. Having said all this, you would think that adenosine is a real live wire and an energizing substance; but it is not. If you inject adenosine (or any other substance that increases adenosine levels) into the body it has a calming effect. It lowers blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature, protects against seizures, slows down the motility of the digestive tract and generally balances the body's reaction to stress. In large amounts it can make you feel quite lethargic and sleepy. This is because adenosine can slow down the release of neurotransmitters—chemicals that carry messages from one nerve cell to another. To do this, the adenosine molecule must first bind to specific receptor sites on the cell surface. Caffeine has a molecular structure that is so similar to adenosine, that it can bind to the same receptor sites and block the action of adenosine. Without the calming and controlling effect of adenosine, nerve cells continue to fire ... and fire more rapidly. As long as the caf-

feine molecules sit on the receptor sites, we are literally firing on all cylinders.

Caffeine not only blocks the action of adenosine, it also stimulates the adrenal glands to produce two stress hormones—adrenalin and cortisol. This gives a small kick to the system and, as part of the enjoyment of an occasional cappuccino, is no bad thing. But regular coffee drinkers are keeping their bodies on a constant state of emergency by stimulating themselves with caffeine. Imagine that your adrenal glands are like a bank account. Genetic factors and your lifestyle determine how long you can continue to make repeated withdrawals against your energy reserves and still maintain good health. If you are one of those coffee drinkers who think that they get no effect from caffeine, you need to think again. If you can go to sleep right after a double shot of espresso, ask yourself why your adrenal glands have stopped responding and what that says about your adrenal health.

The adrenal glands are powerhouses of hormone production—releasing more than 150 hormones including testosterone, estrogen and cortisol. It is the long term effects of raised cortisol levels that should make you think... as long as you are able to think. High levels of cortisol shrinks the part of the brain responsible for memory, blunts the immune system and interferes with the body's ability to fight infections. Time to take another day off with a sore throat, cold or the flu? Cortisol gets into every cell. Without it you are dead but if kept high for too long, it's equally critical. When stressed on a daily basis—either from caffeine or normal every day stress, cortisol levels remain high and you literally stew in your own juices. Essentially caffeine lowers your ability to handle stress. Events you would normally handle with calm confidence suddenly become insurmountable, adding to your stress and causing you to reach for the coffee jar. This is unfortunate for the 140,000 travelers, who pass through London's Gatwick airport





each day, and have a fear of flying. In 1995, 1.4 million cups of coffee (equivalent to 5.2 tons of coffee beans) were served in an effort to calm them down!

Mood and energy swings reflect fluctuations in blood sugar levels. Caffeine promotes the breakdown of glycogen and the liver pours glucose into the bloodstream. This triggers the pancreas to secrete excess insulin resulting in a sharp blood sugar drop (hypoglycemia). There are over 208 acids in coffee which, along with the stimulation of stomach acid production, can contribute to indigestion and a variety of health problems caused by over-acidity. Caffeine is a diuretic, making you urinate more frequently. Men with prostate problems can help themselves by cutting out coffee, which irritates the urinary tract and bladder. In both male and female bodies, caffeine forces the excretion of vital minerals essential for health, especially calcium, potassium and iron.

Caffeine is not technically classed as an addictive drug, but certainly many individuals depend upon it and suffer significant withdrawal symptoms if they go without their regular stimulant fix. They complain of a “washed out” feeling, tiredness, headaches and generally unwell. These are exactly some of the sensations that anyone recovering from an operation would suffer. We are told that they are due to the after effects of the anesthetic, but a recent study has suggested that it is due to caffeine withdrawal. It is common practice to tell patients to avoid taking any drink containing caffeine both immediately

before and after surgery. In fact once you get to this level, caffeine starts to have other less desirable effects on the body. In a sense you become over-stimulated; you are jittery, anxious, on edge all the time, nervous and sometimes visibly unsteady. This is known as the “coffee shakes” and is because caffeine disrupts the fine motor co-ordination within the nerves. These are also the symptoms that drive people to their first cup of the day. A recent study showed clearly that overnight caffeine deprivation is enough to induce significant negative effects including tiredness, headaches, depressed mood, anger, and dejection. Once you have downed your first dose of caffeine, these feelings are relieved. This leads people to think that caffeine is making them feel better, but it is simply covering up the effects of too much and a tolerance to it. On top of this is add the overall stress of the body, so no wonder caffeine drinkers wake up in the morning feeling lousy. The feelings of withdrawal are an indication that a powerful, toxic chemical is being drained from your body.

These withdrawal symptoms are not pleasant and tend to last anything from 12 to 72 hours—as the “guinea pigs”, who took part in my research, will attest. I asked them to give up caffeine for 2 weeks and tell me (via questionnaire) how they felt before and after the “caffeine challenge”. Comments such as “I have more energy,” “My headaches have gone,” “I sleep so much better now,” and “I seem to be feeling less stressed,” were common. Even those who cut down their caffeine intake benefited in terms of feeling better.

Switching to decaf is a popular option. However, decaf still contains around 10mg of caffeine in a large mug—still enough to stimulate healthy adrenal glands a jolt. Decaf also contains all the coffee acids that may cause stomach problems. In fact, since the decaffeination process is also harsh, it destroys many of the flavor components so decaf is made from the strongly flavored robusta bean. Regular coffee, made from arabica beans, tends to be less caustic. The acids in coffee—regular and decaf—can challenge the body’s alkaline balance. Calcium is used to buffer these excess acids. In the process, calcium reserves are depleted and coffee drinkers are at risk from osteoporosis. In some cases, decaf coffee can be worse for you compared with a regular brew. There are two methods used to decaffeinate the coffee beans; one is much healthier than the other!

The process is carried out when the coffee beans are green—before roasting or fermentation, by “washing” with water or a solvent. The solvent is either methyl chloride (the basis of paint stripper), or ethyl chloride (better known as a dry cleaning fluid!). These solvents can leave low levels of residues, which (if you are sensitive to them), are probably more harmful than the caffeine they are removing. The other method involves steam and carbon dioxide to remove the caffeine. It is a more expensive method, but does not leave any potentially harmful residues. To find out which decaffeination method has been used, you need to read the label. If it does not mention that water has been used or is vague about the method of decaffeination, you are probably drinking a brew of residual paint stripper!

The pure caffeine that is extracted is not wasted. It is ladled back into soft drinks and also many over the counter cold remedies and headaches pills. So if you suffer from a withdrawal headache as you cut down on your caffeine intake, remember not to reach for an alternative source in the form of a headache pill!

Sometimes you have to feel worse before you feel better—and this is true when you give up caffeine. Withdrawal mood swings, low energy and headaches go hand in hand with fatigue as your body begins to recover from its caffeine driven stress and find its natural pace.

Once you are through the withdrawal phase, expect to feel better than you have felt for years. You may notice you have better skin, less mood swings, more energy and more friends as a result of giving up caffeine.

Typical caffeine content of various foods and beverages

	Average amount per 150ml cup or as stated (mg)	Range (mg)
Ground coffee	115	60 - 180
Instant coffee	65	30 - 120
Tea	40	20 - 60
Cocoa	4	2 - 20
Drinking chocolate	4	2 - 15
Decaf coffee	4	2 - 4
Decaf tea	3	2 - 4
Cola, 330ml can	40	30 - 40
Lucozade, 330ml can	40	30 - 40
Dark chocolate, 100g bar	80	70 - 90
Milk chocolate, 100g bar	20	4 - 60
Painkillers, 2 tablets	60	30 - 130
No Doz, 1 tablet	100mg	N/A

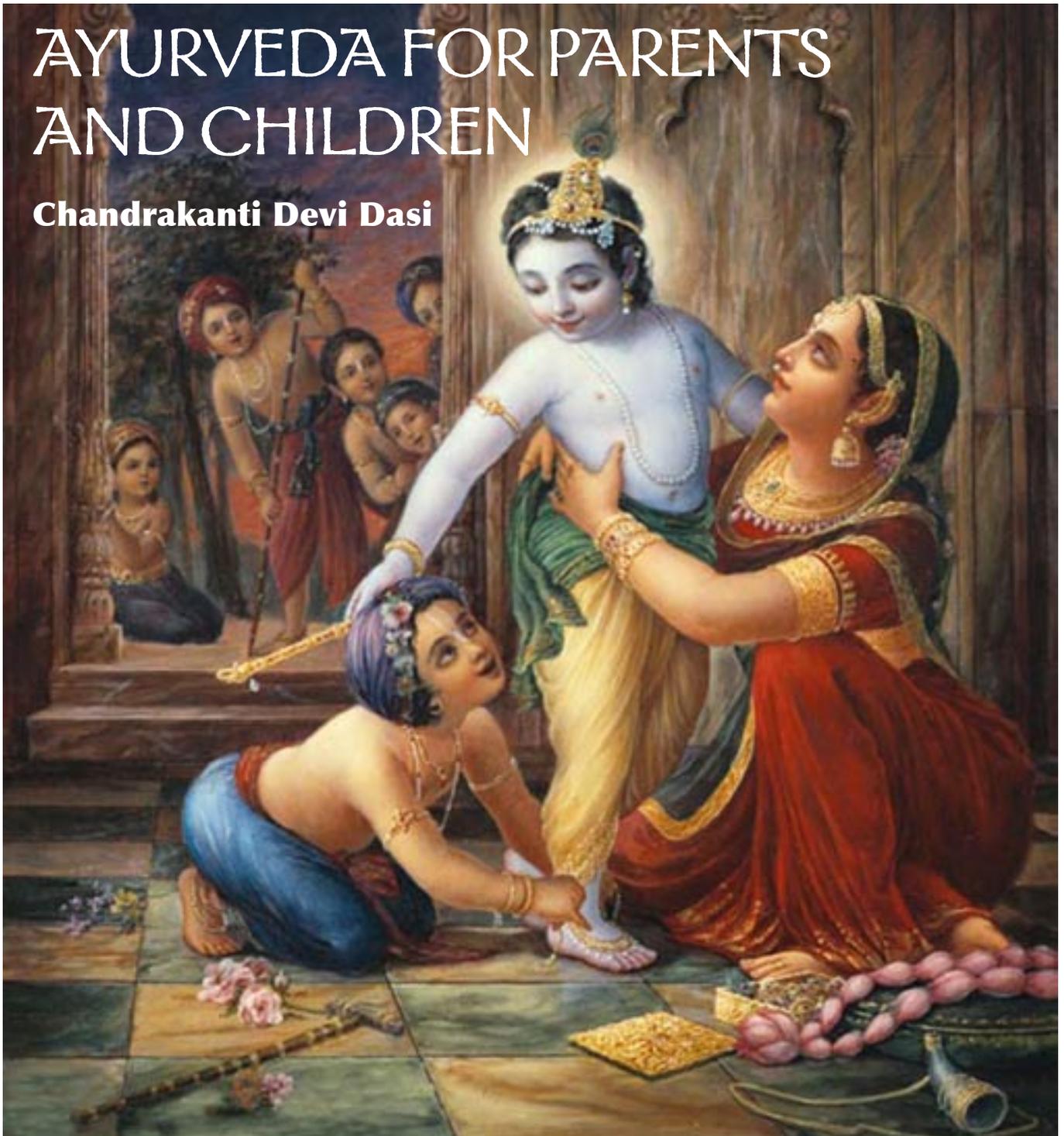
What to drink instead?

- **Caffeine free** (or very low levels) drinks
- **Herbal teas**—chamomile, peppermint, lemon verbena, fennel, rosehip.
- **Fruit teas**—blackcurrant bracer, orange dazzler, apple magic.
- **Milk and cocoa**, drinking chocolate, Horlicks and malted bed-time drinks
- **Fruit juices**—dilute fresh orange juice with fizzy mineral water for a long refreshing drink when it is hot. Dilute apple concentrate with hot water and add a few cloves for a warming drink when it is cold.
- **Decaffeinated tea and coffee**
- **Low caffeine coffee**—if you enjoy the taste of coffee, but don’t want the caffeine, try Koffie Kan. The different blends contain about half the caffeine content compared with regular brands. Koffie Kan beans are organic and grown at high altitude, which makes them naturally low in caffeine.

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AYURVEDA FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Chandrakanti Devi Dasi



BECOMING A PARENT is both an important and a difficult task. According to *sastra*, the parents' duty to the child begins at conception. The consciousness the parents have at conception greatly influences the mentality of the child. The child should be wanted, valued, and loved. This usually occurs when the marriage is loving and stable. If either parent is nervous, depressed, unsatisfied, or irritable, this is not good for bringing up children. The mother's role is one of endless patience, faith, and love, and her husband must be supportive. Mutual love and understanding in the service of Krishna is the best basis for a family.

Our children should be physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy. The health of a baby begins before conception with the *samskaras* recommended in *sastra*. Vaishnava culture should be practiced in all spheres of the baby's life, so that his or her life is completely spiritualized.

Ayurveda gives practical advice for conception, pregnancy, and child-raising. The act of impregnation and conception (*garbha-dhana-samskara*) can be performed in service to Krishna once a month. Srila Prabhupada advised chanting fifty rounds of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* beforehand. The days favorable for

garbhadhana-samskara are: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15 days after the end of the menstruation cycle (the uneven numbers for a girl, and the even for a boy). According to the lunar calendar it is unfavorable to conceive a child during these times: the first ninety-six hours of the woman's monthly period; the full moon (*purnima*) or new moon (*amavasia*); the 8th (*ashtami*), 11th (*ekadashi*), 13th (*traiodashi*), or 14th (*chaturdasi*) days of the lunar month; fasting days (*vrata*); or when one's spouse is weak or sick. Unsuitable places are: temples, sacred places (*tirthas*), crematoriums, the guru's ashram, the home of another Vaishnava, under a sacred tree, the cowshed (*goshala*), in the forest, and in water. The best time is between 21 and 24 p.m., avoiding midnight. The most appropriate place is your own home and bed. Women are recommended to fast or follow a light diet (without grains, fat, or heavy food), and men should have a feast (rich in ghee, sweets, and so on).

During pregnancy the recommended diet is a mild and nourishing one, which calms both *vata* and *pitta*. Avoid sour, salty, hot, spicy, fried, dry, pungent, too sweet, and difficult-to-digest food. Salt should be taken only in small quantities. Milk and homemade milk products (such as ghee and *paneer*) are recommended. Avoid food that upsets *vata* and causes constipation, such as, dried fruit, salad, spinach, potatoes, and bitter food.

Avoid working with computers, watching television, and taking hot baths. Avoid strong herbs (e.g. laxatives), artificial vitamins, aloe vera (both before pregnancy or when you are already pregnant), and unpleasant sounds, smells, and sights. Tension and stress are dangerous during pregnancy. Rest, tranquility, relaxation, abstaining from heavy physical work and heavy exercise, less travel, and less staying in the sun are all recommended. Taking early-morning walks lowers *pitta* and calms the body and mind. Sexual contact and strong negative emotions are unfavorable. They can seriously affect the child in the womb and bring troubles later in life.

A woman who is pregnant is very sensitive. The father should take care to be especially kind, attentive, and patient. The emotions of the expectant mother increase as the pregnancy goes on and she can react strongly even to small things. Violence, even in slight forms, directed against a pregnant woman, is considered a great sin. We should treat an expectant woman with respect and love. She should feel the support of her husband, family, and society.

In the morning, before having a warm bath, the mother should have a relaxing, softening oil massage (whole body) with slightly warmed oil. To calm *vata* use sesame oil; *pitta*, coconut oil; *kapha*, maize oil. Fresh cow's milk is essential for a pregnant woman and the baby. It is most important during the first month because this is the time when the embryo's head forms. If it causes too much mucus it can be diluted with the same volume of water as milk, and then boiled with a pinch of turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, or cardamom.

To help combat drowsiness and vomiting the mother can take warm milk (with a few drops of rose water), coconut milk, and an early, light breakfast. An empty stomach may be the cause of morning sickness. It is good to eat small meals six times

daily. Do not eat too much. During pregnancy, the mother needs extra calcium. To get this, soak ten raw almonds in water overnight and in the morning peel and eat them. Almonds have abundant protein and its absence, as well as the absence of calcium, may be a cause of morning sickness. If the mother frequently vomits, then she should drink more water to avoid dehydration. A good cure for this is the juice of a lemon, 2 teaspoons of unrefined sugar, a pinch of salt, and a liter of water. One cup of this drink can be taken every two hours. During the eighth month avoid taking honey, especially with milk.

To avoid urinating at night the mother may take a handful of white, ground sesame seeds, with a teaspoon of molasses or other unrefined sugar. This will calm *vata*. Do not take any drinks less than two hours before going to bed. Exclude drinks such as black and green tea, coffee, Coca-cola, and hot chocolate.

If the mother suffers from swelling then she can take cumin, coriander, or fennel tea two or three times a day. Mix equal quantities of these spices and cook them (1 teaspoon of the mixture for 1 cup hot water). The swelling may also be caused by a protein deficiency or a lack of ferrum or folic acid. In this case she should look for qualified medical help and advice about her diet and medicine.

During pregnancy, and especially in the ninth month, more hearing (*sravanam*) and chanting (*kirtanam*) of the Lord's holy names is recommended. Reading *Srimad Bhagavatam* aloud is especially recommended, so that the child will also hear it. All activities performed with devotion will be especially favorable for the child's spiritual life. It is not good for the mother to be lazy, because the child will be slow and idle as a result.

Traditionally, the best food to give a newborn is ghee. The father would repeat the 700 verses of the *Bhagavad-gita* and put the middle finger of his right hand in a pot of ghee. When the baby was cleaned after birth, the ghee was immediately given by the father to the child by putting a little on the baby's tongue.

The easiest way to create the child's healthy eating habits is for the parents to practice good eating habits. *Yoga-asanas* properly done are also helpful for children and can help the child maintain its health.

Children between two and three tend to be obstinate. If a parent threatens or hurts them physically it will block the love and trust in the relationship. Punishment through early childhood (up to age five) is counter-productive, because the child cannot understand why they are being punished. They should be trained and taught but not punished. When the child is older and is punished, he or she will accept it and understand it only if there is already an established loving relationship with the parents.

When children enter puberty, discipline is best encouraged by establishing a friendly relationship. This is the most difficult period for the child. Be encouraging in such a way that the child becomes eager to be self-disciplined.

Ayurveda can help parents and children make the most of their lives. Hare Krishna!

KEEPING YOUR EYES BRIGHT

Prahladananda Swami

EVEN FOR A devotee it is common sense to take care of the body that Lord Krsna has provided us with for our devotional service. Although devotees may follow principles of cleanliness and regulation that naturally nourish their health, when it comes to their eyes what do they do for them? Usually, nothing. In the modern computer age perhaps we have to consider taking more care of them. So many devotees are using computers and straining their eyes.

In this material body eyes use a major part of the brain's resources. Almost 40 per cent of the brain's physical capacity is used for seeing. Four out of twelve cranial nerves are dedicated to sight, two more of these nerves are used for assisting the sense of sight. As compared to this, for digestion and the working of the heart only one nerve is used.

CVS, Computer Vision Syndrome, is a label that indicates straining the eyes due to working at a computer. In a recent study it was discovered that 90% of employees who work for three hours a day or more at computers suffer from some form of eye trouble.

What to do? Some suggestions:

- 1.** Make sure the lighting where you are working is adequate. Too much contrast in intensity of light between the computer screen and the environment will strain the eyes.
- 2.** Avoid screen glare.
- 3.** Don't stare at your work when concentrating on it, keep your gaze gentle, and close your eyes now and then for a few moments to relax them.
- 4.** Sit in a position where the neck and body are relaxed while looking at the screen of the computer. Other workspace ergonomics should be considered.

- 5.** Consider taking breaks from staring at the computer screen. Lack of blinking due to staring will dry the eyes out and may cause irritation.
- 6.** A good healthy diet and exercise are also important for good healthy eyes and vision.
- 7.** Get enough sunlight when possible. Sunlight is the source of prana and energy for the eyes and the body. However, avoid staring directly into the sun.
- 8.** Ayurveda recommends that after eating take some water and put in your mouth. Leave it there for sometime and then put the water into your eyes. The eyes are a *pitta* or fire organ and when digestion begins the heat in the body increase with possible deleterious effects on the eyes. Putting water in the eyes, especially saliva in the eyes, cools them.
- 9.** After eating, avoid intensely using your eyes for an hour.
- 10.** Eye relaxation can be a major help. For this a technique called palming can be useful.

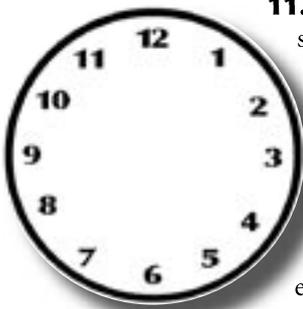
- a.** To practice palming sit in an upright position keeping the back and neck straight and the head still. Rub your hands together briskly to generate heat.
- b.** Gently close your eyes and cup your palms gently over your eyes without pressing the eyes.
- c.** Breath naturally, but fully and relax for a few minutes.
- d.** Feel how your eyes are becoming soothed, refreshed, and relaxed.
- e.** Let your eyes become completely passive.





flash fr
take of

- f. Opening your eyes, let them gaze softly into the darkness.
- g. Finally, slide your fingertips softly down across your forehead, your eyelids, your nose, your cheeks, your lips and your chin.

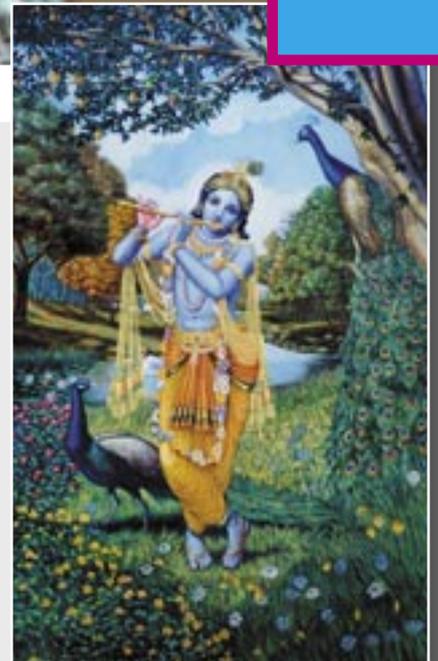


11. Exercising the eyes will help strengthen the eye muscles. Here is a simple one called "The Clock."

- Imagine that you are gazing at the face of an old fashioned clock with numbers and hands. See that the clock face fills the entire wall in front of you.
- Look up at 12 o'clock and then look down at 6 o'clock, ten times up and down.
- Look at 3 o'clock and then at 9 o'clock, ten times back and forth.
- Look at 11 o'clock and then at 5 o'clock, ten times back and forth.
- Look at 1 o'clock and then at 7 o'clock, ten times back and forth.
- Look at 10 o'clock and then at 4 o'clock, ten times back and forth.
- Look at 2 o'clock and then at 8 o'clock, ten times back and forth.
- Finally move your eyes all around on the outside of the clock ten times clockwise (and then rest your eyes by palming) and then ten times counter-clockwise (and then palm).
- After each exercise, close your eyes for a few seconds and relax them.

Tratak

Visualize the form of the Lord and His pastimes, this will strengthen the inner vision. Most of sight comes not from the brain, but from the internal workings of the mind. The eyes are receiving a billion impressions per second, only a few are accepted by the mind.



Stare at a beautiful picture of Lord Krishna without blinking for 1-3 minutes. Your eyes will water, cleansing the eyes and tear ducts. Now close your eyes and visualize the picture in your mind. This will improve your eyesight, concentration and love for Lord Krishna.

For more detailed eye exercises there are books such as *Bate's Method* and books by Sivananda yoga that describe methods for not only relaxing and strengthening the muscles that aide in vision, but also for improving our visual acuity.

Try a few of these suggestions and see if you view the world in a new light.

Herbal Help

How herbs can help medical problems

Raga Manjari Devi Dasi and Rama Prasad

(Continued from the previous issue, No.8 / 2002)



CONSTIPATION

Kapha types get constipation because of a lack of muscle tone and an accumulation of toxins. Herbs that tone the intestine, such as *triphala* and dandelion, are suitable treatments for this. *Vata* constipation is more likely to be triggered by dehydration, stress, or a change in routine caused by traveling. Lubricating laxatives like flaxseed oil, castor oil, or prune juice are effective treatments for this. *Pittas* are least likely to suffer constipation, but when they do, it is often linked to inflammation or poor functioning of the liver and gall bladder. Cooling liver tonics, such as aloe vera juice, senna, and dandelion generally re-establish the elimination process. All types may benefit by increasing fiber with psyllium husks, to bulk the intestine.

Lifestyle changes

The golden rule of bowel harmony contains three things—fluid, fiber, and fitness. Plenty of warm fluids and liquid foods help flush out undigested waste. This is especially important during plane flights, exercise, cold and windy weather, and in hot temperatures. Conversely, dry, baked, fried, or dehydrated

foods in excess clog up the gastro-intestinal tract. Mixing warm water with chamomile helps the water become absorbed into deeper tissues. Fiber stimulates the intestinal peristalsis involved in bowel motions. Good sources of fiber are bran, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Exercise promotes healthy muscle tone and function, bringing toxins to the bowel and flushing them out. Excessive tension in the abdomen, however, can lead to a spastic colon, which disturbs elimination. To prevent this one can squat and massage the abdomen in a clockwise direction.

Case study

Emily, a seventeen-year-old with a *vata* constitution, had intermittent constipation. She had a very low fiber diet and rarely drank more than two cups of tea a day. She was asked to eliminate white flour, white rice, dairy products, and red meat from her diet. The bulk of Emily's meals then consisted of brown rice, bean and vegetable casseroles with digestive spices, and at least six cups of chamomile, licorice or fennel tea daily. Emily practiced a yogic colon cleanse called *shanka prakshalana* once a month for four months and took *triphala*.



FLATULENCE

Occasional flatulence is a natural bi-product of digestion. However chronic and excessive wind is a painful and embarrassing indicator that the digestion is deranged. For this problem, Ayurveda has an abundance of useful household herbs. To increase digestive enzymes, herbs such as ginger, piper longum, and asafetida are invaluable. Mild laxative herbs such as *triphala* and castor oil help clear out fermenting intestinal toxins. Herbal oil enemas (*vastis*) are another effective way of cleansing the colon. Specific culinary herbs and spices are Ayurveda's specialty. Add the following spices to meals to reduce gas: cumin, cardamom, fennel, coriander, ajwain, and ginger. Charcoal and peppermint tablets give temporary relief in extreme cases.

Lifestyle changes

Since flatulence is most commonly caused by excess *vata* in the colon, a *vata*-pacifying diet and regime is often helpful. *Vata* increases as a result of stress, anxiety, dehydration, exhaustion, flying, irregular meals, and cold and windy weather. To reduce the impact of these influences, meals should be taken in a relaxed way, with decreased talking and more chewing. What helps are daily abdominal massages with warm sesame oil and exercises to strengthen and stretch the abdominal and back muscles. Gaseous foods or those that easily ferment should be minimized, especially at night. These include nuts, beans, soymilk, cabbage, raw vegetables, yeast, sugar, milk, carbonated drinks, and, of course, red meat, which devotees already avoid.

Case study

Mark suffered from gas ever since he had a bout of giardia. A powder mix called *hinguvachadi* helped to reduce the gas. Mark also took a clove and wormwood tincture to eradicate any lingering intestinal bugs. A cleansing diet of vegetables, grains, and digestive spices gave the digestion a chance to clear out built-up toxins. Mark then had a series of five oil enemas and maintained his recovery with liver herbs, including dandelion-root tea and garlic.

LIVER DISORDERS

When the liver is weak the whole body suffers, as unwanted toxins are retained and desirable nutrients are not absorbed. A liver disease may strike anyone through an infection like hepatitis. It can also affect anyone who neglects diet and exercise or is exposed to environmental pollutants. Ayurveda restores liver function with a three-step approach. First, one must remove toxins from the diet and environment. Second, one must flush accumulated toxins from the deeper tissues. Third, the liver and other digestive organs are regenerated with herbs. Primary herbs for liver problems include dandelion root, St Mary's thistle, senna, gentian, burdock, red clover, barberry, golden seal, echinacea, garlic, *raasna*, *bhringaraja*, turmeric, and *guduchi*.

Lifestyle changes

By relieving the load on the liver, it can then channel more energy into removing accumulated toxins and restoring cellular function. This is best achieved by going on a fruit or vegetable fast for three to seven days. Specific foods for the liver include white radish, beetroot, celery, dandelion root, aloe vera, chlorophyll, bitter melon, bitter lettuces, ginger, and ash gourd. Check your body-type diet-chart to make sure they are suitable. After the purification diet, avoid fats, oils, processed food, refined flour, sugar, salt, and inorganic food. Also avoid, as devotees already do, nicotine, alcohol, drugs, and red meat. Essential vitamins, minerals, and protein are poorly absorbed with a liver dysfunction, so supplements are often advisable.

Case study

John, a forty-four-year-old with a *pitta* constitution, had liver cirrhosis, resulting from fifteen years of alcoholism. John had stopped drinking with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous, but the damage was done. Since he had little appetite it was easy for him to go on a vegetable juice fast for five days. He was also given a herbal decoction from neem, *picrorhiza*, turmeric, *gota cola*, *brahmi*, licorice, *guduchi* and sandalwood along with St Mary's thistle tablets. By strictly following the *pitta*-pacifying diet and regimes as well as dealing with suppressed anger (sometimes linked to liver disorders) John was put on the road to recovery.

(Continued in the next issue)



Report from Eye Camp at Varsana

by staff of Bhaktivedanta Hospital in Mumbai
February, 2003

In Vrindavan, India, 40 employees from Bhaktivedanta Hospital trained in eye service, and 50 devotees from the congregation of Mumbai and Pune performed or assisted eye operations at an Eye Camp.

Two teams of devotees went to 65 villages around Varsana to inform people about the Eye Camp, and they also informed every school. Two newspapers announced it.

On February 21, a fire sacrifice invoked the blessings of Srimati Radharani, and eye surgeons offered oblations in the fire.

On Feb. 22, Shivkumar Dalmia came with his family and inaugurated the camp, and operation theaters started work early in the morning. In three days 281 operations (cataract treatment and extraction of teeth) were performed.

The ward accommodated 150 patients and one relative per patient. The ward team worked 24 hours a day in 12-hour shifts, and their services consisted of pre-operative preparations, coordination of operations, post-operative treatment, and discharge of the patients 24 hours after surgery. On discharge each patient received a month's supply of eye drops, a blanket, a set of sunglasses, and a picture of Sri Sri Radha-Gopinath. Sumptuous *prasadam* was served to the patients all four days. On March 1, 255 patients came back for follow-up examinations.

Overall, everybody was in a high spirit of service to the residents of Vrindavan, and by the blessings of Srimati Radharani the Eye Camp was an unforgettable experience.

New York Times: The rise of a virus from China's provinces—a crafty germ spreads

—Elizabeth Rosenthal

Hunde, China—an hour south of Guangzhou, the Dongyuan animal market presents endless opportunities for an emerging germ. In hundreds of cramped stalls that stink of blood and guts, wholesale food vendors tend to veritable zoos that will grace Guangdong Province's tables: snakes, chickens, cats, turtles, badgers, and frogs. And, in summer, sometimes rats, too.

They are all stacked in cages one on top of another—which in turn serve as seats, card tables and dining quarters for the poor migrants who work there. On a recent morning, near stall 17, there were be-headed snakes, disemboweled frogs and feathers flying as a half-alive headless bird was plunked into a basket.

If you were a corona virus, like the one that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome, known as SARS, it would be easy to move from animals to humans in the kitchens and food stalls of Guangdong, a province notorious for exotic cuisine prepared with freshly killed beasts.

Indeed, preliminary studies of early SARS victims here in Guangdong have found that an unusually high percentage were in the catering profession—a tantalizing clue, perhaps, to how a germ that genetically most resembles chicken and rodent viruses has gained the ability to infect thousands of humans.

One of the earliest cases (last December), was a seller of snakes and birds here who died at Shunde's First People's Hospital of severe pneumonia. His wife and several members of the hospital staff contracted it as well, setting off an outbreak that now sounds eerily familiar.

"Oh yes, I heard that a guy here died of that pneumonia," said Li Songyu, a 40-year-old wearing a neat tan blouse, as she filleted live frogs and dumped them into a basket. "But it is very safe and sanitary now."

Around the same time in December, Huang Xinchu, a chef, was admitted to the Heyuan People's Hospital, 100 miles to the north, ultimately infecting eight doctors there. On Jan. 2, another desperately ill chef was hospitalized in the city of Zhongshan, south of Shunde, setting off an outbreak.

But if such early outbreaks present scientific hints about the origin of SARS, they also provide painful political lessons on how a disease that has spread worldwide could have been prevented.

Video games impair the brain

The *Mainichi Daily News* in Japan reported that a professor at Nihon University has concluded that playing video games for extended periods may cause a shift in brain waves, a shift which may become permanent in hardcore players. The study, conducted by professor Akio Mori of the university's College of Humanities and Sciences, suggests a negative correlation between (a) the length of time a game is played and (b) activity shown in the prefrontal region of the brain, the portion that governs emotion and creativity. The researchers did not see a recovery in prefrontal brain activity after hardcore gamers stopped playing.

The study analyzed 240 people between 6 and 29. Measuring their brain waves, Mori found that beta-wave activity (which indicates an actively-engaged brain, and shows up when a person converses or works) decreased while people played games, but usually rebounded after playing stopped. However, in hardcore video-game players (those who spent 2 to 7 hours per day playing), beta-wave activity was constantly near zero even when they were not playing. This showed that they hardly used the prefrontal regions of their brains.

"I want people to be aware of the quality of games and the time young people spend playing them during their earlier years, when sentiment develops," Mori said of the results. "Many video-games stir up tension and a feeling of fear, and there is concern that this could have an effect on the autonomic nerves. During childhood, playing outside with friends, not video-games, is the best option."

The weaker sex

Maggie Jones

Men start out ahead: 115 males are conceived for every 100 females. But it's downhill from there.

- The male fetus is at greater risk of miscarriage and stillbirth.
- Male births slightly outnumber female births (105 to 100), but boys have a higher death rate if born premature: 22 percent compared with 15 percent for girls.
- Overall, more newborn males die than females (5 to 4).
- Sudden-infant-death syndrome is one and a half times as common in boys as in girls.
- Boys are three to four times as likely to be autistic.
- Mental retardation afflicts one and a half times as many boys as girls.
- Dyslexia is diagnosed two to three times as often in boys as girls.
- As teenagers, boys die at twice the rate of girls.
- Boys ages 15-19 are five times as likely to die in a homicide.
- Boys ages 15-19 are almost 11 times as likely to die by drowning.
- Boys ages 16-19 are nearly twice as likely to die from a car accident.
- Men are 16 times as likely as women to be colorblind.
- Men suffer hearing loss at twice the rate of women.
- Though women attempt suicide two to three times as often as men, four times as many men actually kill themselves.
- The male hormone testosterone is linked to elevations of LDL, the bad cholesterol, as well as declines in HDL, the good cholesterol.

- Men have fewer infection-fighting T-cells and are thought to have weaker immune systems than women.
- Men have a higher death rate from pneumonia and influenza than women.
- By the age of 36, women outnumber men.
- Men ages 55-64 are twice as likely as women to die in car accidents.
- Men ages 55-74 are twice as likely as women to die of heart disease.
- In the United States, men are twice as likely to die from parasite-related diseases.

- Among people 65 and older, men account for 84 percent of suicides.
- Stroke, cancer, diabetes, heart disease and accidents kill men at a higher rate than women.
- American men typically die almost six years before women do.
- By the age of 100, women outnumber men eight to one.
- While male breast cancer is rare, a higher percentage of men die from the disease than women because it is typically detected at a much later stage.
- The good news? Men who live to be 100 tend to be in better shape than their centenarian female counterparts.

LETTERS

A faddish fever

Hong Kong—The media reported that people in U.S. Chinatowns were worried about SARS. Maybe it has something to do with the Chinese proclivity for following the latest fad. When it comes to disease, SARS is the latest thing.

But in the year 2000, 65,313 people died in the USA from influenza or pneumonia.

Why no outcry of an epidemic? Because it's nothing new. For the first three weeks after SARS was publicized in Asia (on March 11) there were sixteen deaths from "atypical" pneumonia in Hong Kong. In the same period and place, the expected number of deaths from "typical" pneumonia was about 150.

So people in Chinatown should relax. Only 11% of the people who develop symptoms of SARS are ill enough to require intensive care. And of those, 89% recover sufficiently to be discharged within about two weeks. The mortality rate is around 2%. This is dramatically lower than the mortality rate for typical pneumonia in Hong Kong, which is 12%.

SARS is easier to catch but harder to die from than the usual, boring pneumonia. So why the hubbub this spring? The media has to come up with something for their readers, or actually their editors. But here's something they don't print: A hundred percent of people die. Disease, old age, death, and rebirth recur again and again. SARS is another reminder to get serious about spiritual life.

— *Sravaniya Devi Dasi*

Srila Prabhupada's toothpaste

I got a letter from a friend, telling me about experiences with Srila Prabhupada's toothpaste: "Some have been using for years the toothpaste developed by Srila Prabhupada. It has become apparent, unfortunately, that not all is well. In the short term, the toothpaste does indeed stop the production of cavities, as Prabhupada said it would. However, within a year or two, there is a noticeable problem of receding gums. Tamal Krishna Gosvami stopped using the toothpaste when he detected that his gums were rapidly receding. Those who have used it for a long time have had severe cases of receding gums. Furthermore, the abrasiveness of the salt and other ingredients causes the enamel on the top and sides of the teeth to gradually erode. This creates weak teeth, corroded fillings, and such a thinning of the enamel surface that

the dentine shows through. Teeth then become sensitive to citric acids, so that eating fruit causes pain. Any hard substance, even a mustard seed, can cause pain. The teeth can also become gouged due to the abrasions. The deteriorating effects of this toothpaste begin with the first use. If one wishes to disinfect the mouth, diluted, food-grade hydrogen peroxide will do it much better."

— *Kailasvasini Devi Dasi*

Thoughts from a devotee who is a health-care practitioner

"Good friends and health aren't appreciated until they are lost."

I began practicing alternative medicine in 1989. I am now a partner in a medical office, Alachua Integrative Medicine. We serve the Alachua devotee community, now numbering over a thousand members, and the Gainesville area public.

We empower our patients to take health into their own hands. We educate them on proper lifestyles and appropriate means to help them attain their goals. We use acupuncture, Ayurveda, massage therapy, Reiki, nutritional counseling, mental health counseling, and conventional western medicine.

Healing begins when we move in the direction we want. Our lives change moment to moment, day to day, and thought to thought. When life strongly affects you, you may notice changes in the gross and subtle bodies. When you are in stress, your breath becomes shallow, your shoulders and chest get tight. Life impressions affect your life. Intense life experiences may seriously affect it. An important aspect of health education is teaching people to control thoughts. Daily we all have thirty- to sixty-thousand mental images, or self-mind talks. Are your thoughts supportive of your life or creating misery? Thoughts create our future. As Srila Bhativinoda Thakur said: "Forget the past that sleeps, Nor the future dream at all, But live in times that are with thee, and the future thee shall call." Our thoughts affect us on the chemical-biological level. They can change our hormone levels, respiration, and blood flow. In *Krsna Book* Srila Prabhupada says a devotee's mind is like a calm lake, always absorbed in thoughts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. Keep good thoughts.

— *Rasatala Dasa*

Rasatala Dasa is a doctor of naturopathy, a licensed massage therapist and a Reiki master/teacher. He can be reached via: www.alachuahealth.com

Chant

HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA
KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE
HARE RAMA HARE RAMA
RAMA RAMA HARE HARE

...and be happy!

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— in Good Health —*

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