

Hope This Meets You — in Good Health —

*The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry
Issue No. 13 / 2007*



Message from the Minister

In March or April, 2008, ISKCON's first hospice is scheduled to open in Vrindavana. Although death is the most dreadful event for a materialist, for a devotee it is a great opportunity to go back to the spiritual world to live eternally with Lord Krishna and His associates. It is certainly a valuable achievement that ISKCON will have an auspicious arrangement for devotees and members to leave their material bodies in the holy land of Vrindavana.

We all look forward to more such projects in the future. Your servant,

Prahladananda Swami
ISKCON Minister for Health and Welfare



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- The articles in this magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the Health and Welfare Ministry.
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Front cover:
Krishna, Balarama, and Their friends enter the forest.

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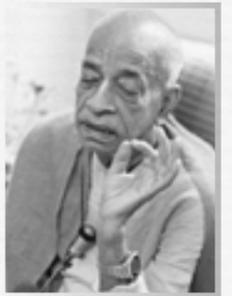
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Quotes from Srila Prabhupada



■ **WE HAVE GOT** such a nice process that even from the base *sudras* we can create *brahmanas* of highest calibre. All the presidents of our centres should see that all the members are strictly observing the brahminical standards, such as rising early, cleansing at least twice daily, reading profusely, and attending *arati*, like that. You begin immediately this process. That is the main work of GBC. Sometimes we see that even they do not wash hands after eating. Even after drinking water we should wash hands. That is *suci*. *Suci* means purest.

— Srila Prabhupada, letter to Rupanuga Dasa, Tokyo, May 3, 1972

Hamsaduta: No, he said, "I was able to get frozen vegetables from the south of Russia. They freeze it and then they sell it," he said, "but it is very expensive, very costly." He was getting frozen.

Prabhupada: That is also nasty. Frozen means nasty. I never take frozen. In the beginning I thought, "Oh, it is very nice, you can get fresh vegetable." But they are not at all fresh.

Hamsaduta: No.

Prabhupada: All rotten, rather the same vegetable, as we have got in India practice, we dry it and keep it. That is tasteful. In season time — suppose this season there is huge quantity of vegetable — so here the system is they cut into pieces during the season and dry it in the sun and keep it. And during out of season it is soaked in water, it revives the old taste, and then you can cook.

Devotee: Tastes as though it is different. The fresh vegetable the taste is very good.
Prabhupada: Fresh vegetable must be, but still there is some taste. But this frozen it has no taste.

— Srila Prabhupada, room conversation, November 3, 1976, Vrindavana

■ **IN GENERAL WARFARE** one must take help from his chariot and horses in order to conquer his enemy, and after conquer-

ing his enemies he may give up the chariot and its paraphernalia. Similarly, as long as one has a human body, one should fully use it to obtain the highest perfection of life, namely going back home, back to Godhead.

— Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.15.45, purport

■ **NOR CAN ONE** who artificially abstains from eating, manufacturing his own personal process of fasting, practice yoga. The Krishna conscious person observes fasting as it is recommended in the scriptures. He does not fast or eat more than is required, and he is thus competent to perform yoga practice. One who eats more than required will dream very much while sleeping, and he must consequently sleep more than is required. One should not sleep more than six hours daily. One who sleeps more than six hours out of twenty-four is certainly influenced by the mode of ignorance. A person in the mode of ignorance is lazy and prone to sleep a great deal. Such a person cannot perform yoga.

— Bhagavad-gita 6.16, purport

■ **THE BEST REMEDY**, not only for Shyama dasi, but for everyone, is to consult some approved physician. But ultimately we have to depend on the mercy of Krishna, so we should chant regularly, pray to Krishna to give us a chance to serve Him, and, if required, we may adopt the approved method of treatment.

— Srila Prabhupada, letter to Kirtanananda Dasa, February 14, 1969

■ **YOU ACCEPT THESE** principles of life, no meat-eating, no intoxication, no illicit sex, and there will be no cancer. Those who are strictly on this line, they never suffer from cancer or any such disease. Now take for example me. I've come here in this country for the last eight years.

How many times have I gone to the doctor? That one heart attack. That is serious, that is another thing. Otherwise, gener-

ally how many times have I gone? I don't pay any bill of doctor. So if we live a very hygienic life, regulated life, there is no question of cancer or any disease. The disease is created by violating nature's law. One of the causes of cancer disease is this contraceptive method. You can make research on it. So they are on one side discovering contraceptive method, contraceptive chemicals, and on the other side researching for cancer disease. And they say also smoking is one of the causes. So why not give up smoking and illicit sex, contraceptive method?

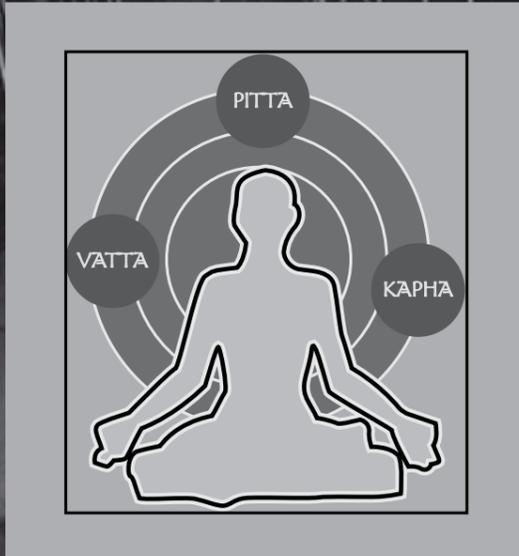
— Srila Prabhupada, morning walk, Los Angeles, May 4, 1973

■ **I AM SORRY TO LEARN** that your health is not very good at the present time. The best thing is that you rest for some time until you are feeling stronger. When J. was feeling very weak, I advised her to take complete rest until she was stronger and then I advised her to go out on *sankirtana* party. So you may follow the same procedure of taking as much rest as you feel you require, and then when you feel it is all right, you resume your activities.

— Srila Prabhupada, letter to Madana Mohana Dasa, Los Angeles, July 23, 1969

■ **I HAVE SENT** some drawings to Yamuna Devi for the certificates, and I hope she is taking proper care. I understand Malati is having some rheumatic condition, and it is causing pain and numbness. The best thing is to take hot baths, and massage with camphor oil, and if it is too much painful, use Sloan's liniment. Best thing is to consult with some expert physician. The Ayurvedic medicine which I could recommend is probably not available in London, but if there is any Ayurvedic shop let me know and I shall recommend some medicine. The best thing is to chant Hare Krishna loudly.

— Srila Prabhupada, letter to Syamasundara Dasa, Seattle, October 10, 1968



THE ROLE OF PANCHAKOSA IN TREATMENT PLANNING

Nimai Nitai Dasa

There are three fundamental approaches to Ayurveda that reflect particular psychological dispositions of different types of therapists and patients, derived from a predominating tendency toward manifesting balance (*sattva*), assertiveness (*rajas*), or passivity (*tamas*).

Therapists and patients with a passive disposition often disregard the powerful effect of proper diet, exercise, and rest to protect health, and instead rely on medications, whether “natural” or synthetic, to treat disease conditions. This *tamasic* clinical approach consists mostly of prescribing herbo-mineral compounds and recommending basic, and mostly interim, dietary restrictions.

Therapists and patients with an assertive disposition are often fond of techniques such as harsh purification therapies, physical manipulation, invasive procedures, and other aggressive interventions. Assertive patients are attracted to arduous exercises and practices, in the expectation that such intrusive measures will result in improved health. In the *rajasic* approach, the patient secures the services of various therapists, or else engages in numerous — and often conflicting — therapeutic modalities in the hope of preventing disease. This *rajasic* approach frequently relies on the practice of strong elimination procedures that can drain vitality.

Patients with a balanced disposition, however, are actively involved in maintaining and protecting health, and an Ayurvedic practitioner can act as a knowledge resource. Persons with such a *sattvic* approach learn from the practitioner how to protect their own health through the adoption of a suitable lifestyle, and rely on daily disciplines and self care practices for their well-being. Their focus is on protecting and cultivating health, rather than on avoiding

or treating disease. This approach is called *svasthya vrtta*, or Positive Ayurveda.

Therapists and patients habituated to conventional western medicine (allopathy) and homeopathy often tend to prefer the *tamasic*, passive approach. Therapists and patients inclined to favor “holistic” systems of healing, including western naturopathy, chiropractic, Chinese medicine, and even some forms of modern Ayurveda, tend to prefer the *rajasic*, assertive approach. Patients who are interested in Self Care, and who are convinced that health is the result of cumulative positive practices, prefer the *sattvic*, balanced approach.

Seeking Balance
Suddha Ayurveda understands health as natural equilibrium or balance. This equilibrium emanates from our spirit soul and expands into progressively denser levels or layers of existence. One can visualize human existence as composed of a series of superimposed layers, each extending farther away from the soul, and becoming denser. There are five such layers, or *koshas*, which form the three bodies (*sharira*) of all living entities in this plane of existence.

The causal body, which survives even the cyclic *mahapralaya*, or great dissolution of the manifest universes, is composed of one layer, the *anandamaya kosha*. The subtle body, which survives the physical death of the living entities and transmigrates to new physical bodies, but does not survive the cyclic *mahapralaya*, is composed of three layers: *vijnanamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, and *pranamaya kosha*. The physical body, which perishes upon the observable death of all entities in this plane of existence, is composed of one layer, *annamaya kosha*.



Suddha Ayurveda understands health as natural equilibrium or balance. This equilibrium emanates from our spirit soul and expands into progressively denser levels or layers of existence.

Jivatma Soul	Anandamaya kosha Sustained by bliss	Vijnanamaya kosha Sustained by intellect	Manomaya kosha Sustained by mind	Pranamaya kosha Sustained by energy	Annamaya kosha Sustained by food
	Karana sharira Causal body	Sukshma sharira Subtle body			Sthula sharira Physical body
	< subtler matter — denser matter >				

According to the laws of karma, or cause and effect, the soul manifests the first subtle layer of existence, sustained by delight (*anandamaya kosha*). This layer constitutes the first projection of the soul into the external energy of the Absolute. Contrary to a common misconception in popularized accounts of Ayurveda and some impersonalist schools of Vedanta, this is not the “layer of bliss,” but rather the layer *sustained* or permeated by the bliss that is one of the intrinsic qualities of the soul in its original state.

The *anandamaya kosha* is the first projection into the realm of matter. It is the point at which the soul, which is of the nature of *sat-chit-ananda* (eternity-consciousness-bliss), is veiled by nescience. At this particular juncture, the principle of egoism is generated. This differentiation is fundamentally important, because otherwise one will fall into the error of believing this layer to be free from material contamination and transcendent of false ego, or *ahamkara*.

At this level, balance is sought and expressed through purification of consciousness (*chitta-suddhi*). The aim of this purification is to orient the soul away from the external energy and toward the internal energy of the Absolute. Because the soul is marginal energy, incapable of sustaining independence vis-à-vis the internal and external energies, it must perforce submit to the attraction of one or the other.

Contrary to the opinion of impersonalist speculators, the external energy is not an unqualified, undifferentiated void (*sunya*), but rather the full expression of the eternal individuality of the Absolute and all its inconceivably separate and united parts. Within this internal energy, the soul exists eternally in one of five amorous relationships with the Supreme Being, Sri Krishna, who is described in the Vedas as *sat-chit-ananda vigraha*, the eternal form of existence, consciousness, and bliss.

The second layer is that of intellect (*vijnanamaya kosha*), where balance is expressed as the ability to make correct determinations regarding what is positive or negative, desirable or undesirable, healthful or unhealthy. The intellect is that faculty responsible for making value judgments based on received wisdom and codes of morality.

The third layer is that of mind (*manomaya kosha*), where balance is expressed as the ability to perceive, process, and evaluate accurate information from the environment. The mind is that faculty responsible for reacting to sensory input with either attachment to pleasure or aversion to pain. The mind on its own, regardless of how sophisticated or convoluted its methods, only expresses crude likes and dislikes. Under the guidance of intellect, the mind is capable of processing information dispassionately.

The fourth layer is that of life force (*pranomaya kosha*), where balance is expressed as the ability to react appropriately to the environment, by adapting to changes according to time, place, and circumstance. *Prana* is that faculty that connects and integrates the diverse layers and levels of existence, animating the physical and bringing it under the control of the mind, intellect, and ego. Together, the second, third, and fourth layers are known as the subtle body, or *sukshma sharira*. Balance in the subtle body is attained through *sattva-suddhi*, or purification of assertive (*rajasic*) and passive (*tamasic*) qualities and the cultivation of balance (*sattva*).



There are three pillars of health that radiate from the soul and that pervade, interpenetrate, and integrate the subtle and gross bodies. In essence they are three expressions of the one life-sustaining power of consciousness.

The final and densest layer is that of the physical body (*annamaya kosha*), where balance is expressed as homeostasis, or the maintenance of the proper equilibrium among the biological principles, the tissues, and the excretions. The physical body is composed of the five elemental states of matter, and exhibits their attributes in proportion to their predominance in bodily tissues and structures. The fifth layer is called the physical body, or *sthula sharira*, and balance at this level is pursued through the practice of purification of the gross material elements (*bhuta-suddhi*).

The Three Pillars of Health

There are three pillars of health that radiate from the soul and that pervade, interpenetrate, and integrate the subtle and gross bodies. Although we speak of them as three separate principles, they are in essence three expressions of the one life-sustaining power of consciousness. This power of consciousness adopts these three fundamental forms in order to create, preserve, and destroy whatever is necessary for the expression of embodied existence.

The first of these expressions of soul-consciousness is *prana*, the life force. *Prana* is the animating principle that confers action to every layer of existence. In the layer of ego, *prana* manifests as the divine sound vibration in the core of the heart. In the layer of intellect, *prana* is the organizing pattern that communicates and maintains higher order. In the layer of mind, *prana* quickens the senses of cognition and action, bringing perceptions from the environment to the mind, and communicating the mind’s reactions to the environment. In the layer of energy, *prana* establishes the central and peripheral flow patterns that provide the reliable connection between the mind and the physical body. In the physical layer, *prana* regulates the functions of the heart and the lungs, and governs all transport of sensations and material particles throughout the organism.

When *prana* is flowing unimpeded, we feel invigorated and alert. We have strong vitality and enthusiasm, and there is healthy appetite, proper elimination, normal tissue formation, and sound sleep.

The second of these manifestations of soul-consciousness is *agni*, the power of assimilation. In the layer of ego, *agni* manifests as the principle of austerity, or service to the Divine. In the layer of intellect, *agni* is the capacity to recognize, accept, and understand truth, as communicated through sound vibration. In the layer of mind, *agni* is the ability to digest perceptions and experiences, and to organize them in ways that allow us to react rationally to changing events. In the layer of energy, *agni* is the warmth that allows and sustains our internal homeostasis. In the physical layer, *agni* is the ability to digest and assimilate nutrients from the external environment, and to transform them into extensions of the self.

When *agni* is well regulated, intellect is composed, perception is keen, emotions are controlled, digestion is sound, there is proper bodily heat and thirst, and the skin becomes soft and lustrous.

The third among these expressions of soul-consciousness is *ojas*, the energy of preservation. In the layer of ego, *ojas* manifests as the determination to sustain a lifelong spiritual discipline (*sadhana*). In the layer of intellect, *ojas* is the perseverance of correct discrimination, and attachment to the instruction of the preceptor, the saints, and the scriptures. In the layer of mind, *ojas* restrains excessive pleasure and aversion, and confers equipoise. In the layer of energy, *ojas* bestows endurance for longevity and efficient resistance to challenges from other living entities and the environment. In the physical layer, *ojas* provides cohesion, lubrication, and stability to every bodily tissue, organ, and structure.

When there is sufficient *ojas*, we experience contentment, courage, and dignity. The body is properly proportioned and strong, and the skin is smooth and moist.



Ayurvedic practitioners promote public health measures to protect the health of the entire community, creating an environment that is conducive to individual health. health practitioners systematically apply mental hygiene measures to increase balance, and decrease assertiveness and passivity.

	Ego	Intellect	Mind	Energy	Body
Prana	Respect	Order	Receive / send impulses	Energetic flow patterns	Function / transport
Agni	Inquiry	Truth	Digest / organize experience	Warmth of internal environment	Digestion / assimilation
Ojas	Service	Positive behavior	Store / retrieve memories	Resistance / endurance	Preservation / replacement

From Theory to Practice

Ayurvedic practitioners promote public health measures to protect the health of the entire community, creating an environment that is conducive to individual health. When addressing personal health, practitioners systematically apply mental hygiene measures to increase balance, and decrease assertiveness and passivity. Finally, practitioners prescribe and adopt individualized diurnal, nocturnal, seasonal, social, and developmental disciplines of salutary conduct. When and if a disease process occurs, therapy is the last resort.

The passive Ayurvedic approach focuses its efforts on the gross physical layer and the reactive aspects of the energetic layer. The assertive approach focuses on the internal aspects of the gross physical layer, the core physiological functions of the energetic layer, and the most external aspects of the mental layer. Acting on these layers through herbo-mineral formulas, elimination therapies, and dietary restrictions is considered sufficient for maintaining physical and emotional health in the passive and assertive approaches.

However, the balanced approach of Suddha Ayurveda is anchored on the understanding that the subtlest aspects of existence always precede and control the grosser manifestations of matter. Therefore, treating the mental, energetic, and physical layers of existence only, without first addressing the subtlest and most central layers of intellect and soul, is both ineffective and inefficient. At best, one may achieve a partial or temporary healing, with every possibility that the same causes that produced the disorder in the first place will cause further imbalances. At worst, the treatment will be suppressive, and the organism will manifest deeper and more central imbalances.

This is not some esoteric philosophical concept, but a practical realization. Before one can erect a tower, for example, there must first of all be the will to build it. From the will arises the determination of the project's feasibility, and much additional planning must ensue before the ground is ever broken for construction. The final product, a solid tower of imposing physical weight and volume, is but the expression of that subtle initial will, progressively made denser and more tangible.

Ayurveda shares with all Vedic culture the understanding of this vital truth, which finds expression in the concept of the five elemental qualities and the five elemental states of matter as constituting the foundation of material manifestation. The five elemental qualities of matter are, in descending order from the subtlest to the densest: sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell. The five elemental states of matter are: the field state, derived from sound; the volatile state, derived from touch; the radiant state, derived from sight; the liquid state, derived from taste; and the solid state, derived from smell. Each of these elemental states is denser than the preceding one, and each succeeding state incorporates all the qualities of the previous one.

Layers of existence	Elemental qualities	Elemental states
Ego	Sound	Field
Intellect	Touch	Volatile
Mind	Sight	Radiant
Energy	Taste	Liquid
Physical	Smell	Solid

There is a useful correspondence between the layers of existence (*koshas*), the elemental qualities (*mahagunas*), and the elemental states (*mahabhutas*). The ego is closely related to sound and the field state; intellect to touch and the volatile state; mind to sight and the radiant state; energy to taste and the liquid state; and the physical body to smell and the solid state. Although some relations seem more intuitively obvious than others, deep connections exist that are often reflected in the way we express ourselves in everyday speech. For example, we speak of hearing bells when we are in love, grasping ideas with the intellect, seeing with the mind's eye, feeling drained of energy, or smelling something when it has become very prominent.

Establishing Balance in the Five Layers of Existence

Taking full advantage of these correspondences, Suddha Ayurveda's approach begins by focusing on the organizing power of sound vibration emanating from the highest and most internal realm of existence. When *chitta-suddhi* acts on the layer of ego, balance manifests as pure joy, a celebration of the intrinsic nature of the soul as dependent upon and united with the absolute center in dedication, meditative contemplation, and love. From this plane, sound vibration descends, progressively aligning the layers of intellect, mind, energy, and the physical body.

Through the application of *sattva-suddhi*, balance manifests in the layer of intellect as wisdom to act according to time, place, and circumstance. It is at this level that decisions can be made regarding doing that which is ultimately correct and desirable, rather than what is temporarily pleasant or expedient. Interventions that are specific to this layer include accepting instruction from the qualified preceptor, hearing and reciting the scriptures, and adopting the basic observances and injunctions of spiritual conduct.

At the level of mind, balance manifests as freedom from the five mental afflictions: nescience, false identification, attachment, aversion, and clinging to the temporal material body. These five afflictions create static patterns of behavior that limit our adaptive potential when faced with changing circumstances. Freedom from these five afflictions allows us to react swiftly and appropriately to challenges from other living entities and the environment. Ayurvedic interventions that are specific to the mental layer include association with like-minded practitioners of spiritual discipline, austerity, and proper utilization of sense objects.

In the layer of energy, balance manifests as synchronicity among the three pillars of health, and confers the ability to protect the life force, regulate metabolism, and cultivate endurance. Ayurvedic interventions at this level include energetic therapies, physical and breathing exercises, and complete rest.

Through the application of *bhuta-suddhi* to the layer of the physical body, balance



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When *chitta-suddhi* acts on the layer of ego, balance manifests as pure joy, a celebration of the intrinsic nature of the soul as dependent upon and united with the absolute center in dedication, meditative contemplation, and love.

Layers	Interventions
Ego	Sound vibration Meditation Dedication
Intellect	Accepting instruction Hearing and reciting scripture Observances and injunctions
Mind	Good association Austerity Proper utilization of sense objects
Energy	Energetic therapies Physical exercises Integral rest
Physical	Purification Normalization Individualized nutrition Regeneration

manifests as equilibrium among the biological principles (*vata* / air, *pitta* / bile, *kapha* / phlegm), the bodily tissues, and the three *malas*, or excretions (urine, feces, and sweat). It confers the ability to ingest, transform, appropriate, and excrete nutrients and other elements from and to the external environment. Ayurvedic interventions at this level consist of purification, normalization, individualized nutrition, and regeneration.

Because natural equilibrium rests on the three pillars of life force (*prana*), metabolism (*agni*), and endurance (*ojas*), *Suddha Ayurveda* practitioners strive to protect *prana*, regulate *agni*, and cultivate *ojas*, both in health and in disease. These three cardinal intentions should always guide Ayurvedic treatment planning and clinical interventions.

Kj. Nimai Nitai Dasa, ND(Ay), MPH, MTh, recently retired from the faculties of the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at Tufts University School of Medicine and the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Boston University School of Public Health. He currently directs the Dharma Academy at New Gundicha (ISKCON Boston – The First Western Tirtha), where he serves as Temple President. He can be contacted at nitaidas@iskconboston.org for information on traditional preceptorial education in Suddha Ayurveda. He regrets to decline requests for health advice through electronic mail, as it is neither prudent nor responsible to diagnose and treat at a distance.



Surviving LIFE

Trauma and how to deal with it

Kancana-valli Devi Dasi

In Puranic scriptural texts the present era is ominously described as “the Iron Age of Kali.” In this Age people are constantly under pressure from painful and challenging situations.¹ Anyone who regularly reads a newspaper could easily give examples of the often overwhelming difficulties people face — from the war in Iraq to the hurricanes in the US. Fortunately, the same Puranic texts also give long-term solutions to these problems — with spiritual elevation and the attainment of liberation offered as the quintessential emancipation from all suffering, including the usually insurmountable obstacles of birth and death.

In the short-term, however, we sometimes find that people are so disturbed by their experiences that they become physi-

cally, emotionally, or even mentally ill. Although spiritual practices often go a long way to alleviating such symptoms, sufferers may also need professional therapeutic attention in order for them to be able to function normally. This is especially so when we consider traumatization.

Although the effects of trauma can be long-lasting and painful, there are ways to lessen symptoms and facilitate recovery. So, the question is posed: After a traumatic experience, how to bring healing and growth into our lives in an enduring way? In this article I hope to highlight some important and relevant themes on this subject.

¹ See for example *Srimad-Bhagavatam (Bhagavata Purana)* 1.1.10.

TRAUMA

These days there is quite a lot of discussion about the phenomenon of “trauma” — it being an unfortunate fact that it is difficult to not have some traumatic experience. Types of trauma include abuse, accidents, inescapable attack, natural disasters, surgery, torture, and war. Coping with the results of trauma is often difficult, even for trained therapists and physicians.

One of the things that was noticed in trying to develop a system of therapy for trauma is that animals in the wild never get traumatized. This is despite the fact that they are regularly in life-threatening situations. It is thought that this is because it is easier for them to allow their bodies to discharge the “fight, flight, or freeze” energy produced by a traumatic incident.

Fortunately, therefore, it was realized that there is a big difference between *having* a traumatic experience and *being* traumatized. This is because our bodies, like those of the animals, are also designed to discharge traumatic stress energy. The problem arises when our natural systems become overwhelmed and are no longer able to “digest,” or move on from, a traumatic experience — this is the point where someone is considered to be “traumatized.” As a result, even after many years, an individual can still be suffering from the effects of a trauma because the traumatic energy has somehow become locked up in his or her physical or energetic system.

An important point to remember is that the results of trauma (e.g., shock, dissociation, and depression) are not pathological, that is, they are not a *disease*. They are normal predictable reactions to a traumatic experience.

LAYERS OF EXPERIENCE

In order to deal with trauma effectively it is useful to know some of its ingredients.

Physiological response

Fight, flight, and freeze are automatic responses to danger and they are mediated by our autonomic (*automatic*) nervous system. If fight or flight get stuck on ON, we will always be angry or running “away.” If they get stuck on OFF, we can become permanently frozen. Dissociation or shock are forms of freezing that act as trip-switches to protect our nervous system from over-charging and are symptomatic of a highly charged traumatized state. The brainstem is the part of the brain that regulates the autonomic nervous system. Its “language” is that of sensation, i.e. the feelings we have in the body such as hot, cold, relaxed, tense, tingly, etc.

Getting stuck in freeze can make someone more vulnerable to later traumas because if their system freezes automatically in the face of danger, their access to the other defensive options of fight or flight is restricted. In practical terms this means that if we become traumatized (especially if it includes dissociation), there will be a need to reconnect with the physical body. This will help to re-establish a normal connection with ourselves and with the world. Disconnection from the physical body can even go as far as neurological dissociation, meaning that the brain itself disconnects from certain parts of the body, which will then feel numb or dead.

Physical symptoms of trauma include: fast heart beat, breathing difficulties, high blood pressure, tight stomach, throat constriction, cold skin, and a racing mind. The results of trauma are far-reaching and overwhelming, including panic attacks, addiction, suicidal tendencies, depression, chronic pain, chronic fatigue, ADHD (attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder), and severe phobias.

Emotional response

Four common emotions in trauma are:

- **Terror** — coming from the feeling that we are going to be hurt or destroyed by whatever it is that is attacking us.
- **Rage** — which is invoked in an attempt to protect ourselves.
- **Sense of failure** — coming from the feeling that we couldn’t protect ourselves or that our physiology “failed” in some way.
- **Shame** — can come from:
 - A sense of physiological failure.
 - Having been put in a disgraceful situation which deeply offends one’s sense of modesty, decency, or honor.

Other traumatic emotions are guilt, grief, helplessness, pain, and confusion. If left unresolved, these powerful emotions can cripple one’s ability to function normally. Thus, when dealing with trauma, it is useful to use therapeutic techniques that help to release these emotions and their attendant physical symptoms to discharge them (gently!) from the system.

Over-coupling

This is where a trauma gets linked to other elements in the environment at the time the trauma happened. These elements (or “triggers”) are warning signals for the parts of us that are in charge of survival. These signals, if encountered again, can set off our survival response to help us avoid further harm.

Unfortunately, the useful information about what is dangerous is not the only thing that can get attached to a trauma. For example, say that at the age of five I was in the middle of a birthday party when, out of curiosity, I pushed my finger into a small hole in the wall, an “electrical socket.” As a result, I received a large electric shock. Now, along with the information that these little holes in the wall are dangerous (and painful!), I may also have imbibed some other details, for example the color of the walls, what I was wearing at that time, that I was having a lot of fun, etc. If, in the future, I encounter these things again (especially if they are combined), I can get “triggered” into feeling frightened, angry, defensive, or frozen — without even really know *why*!

Over-coupling can happen in any area of life, including spiritual practices. If a trauma happens while engaged in a spiritual activity, then the activity can get “over-coupled” with the trauma. Consequently, even innocent spiritual activities such as meditation or spiritual ceremonies can start to feel “dangerous.” If the trauma was particularly bad, then we may even abandon spiritual practices because we get triggered into fear, anger, or freeze.

DO’S AND DON’TS

It might be useful to highlight two common myths about how to cure trauma.

The first is that traumatization is exclusively in the memory, the mind, or the event itself. This includes the idea that one can recover from trauma simply by the power of the mind. This is highly misleading since it misses the point that we have a body, which is where the traumatic energy is actually stored. Of course, the body includes the mind and emotions, so these elements are important and should be included — but not in isolation.

The second common myth is that if one can just get the emotions surrounding a traumatic incident “out” (i.e., cathartically express them) or if one simply *talks* about what happened, then that will heal the trauma. It is true that, under careful therapeutic supervision, expression of emotion or talking the problem through can be helpful. But if this process is attempted in an overly chaotic way (as it often is), then the usual effect is that one will become re-traumatized. This is because the body responds in similar ways to both an original event and an imagined event. If the traumatic story or emotions are to be expressed, it helps if this is done in digestible pieces.

Helpful Hints for the Aftermath

In general, when working with a trauma, it is important to go slowly enough so that we do not get overwhelmed again. For example:

- Do not tell the traumatic story in a fast repetitive way, but go through the material gradually whilst taking appropriate breaks. Practice the principle of titration, dealing with a little of the material at a time.
- It helps a lot to notice that a traumatic experience is actually over. Take time to notice the present safety. Remember, however, that if during a traumatic event someone died or was badly injured, it is much harder to feel that it is “over.” In this case, we need time to grieve for the irreplaceable loss.
- An important aspect is to find resources, that is, the good things in life that help us cope. Resources include anything that helps us feel calmer, stronger, happier, and more grounded. It can be helpful to do pleasant things that keep the mind occupied.
- Discharging traumatic energy by allowing the body’s natural mechanisms to release what has become

(continued on page 16)

Herbal Help

How herbs can help medical problems

Raga Manjari Dasi and Rama Prasad Dasa
(Part 6 ; continued from the previous issue, No. 12/2006)

Psoriasis

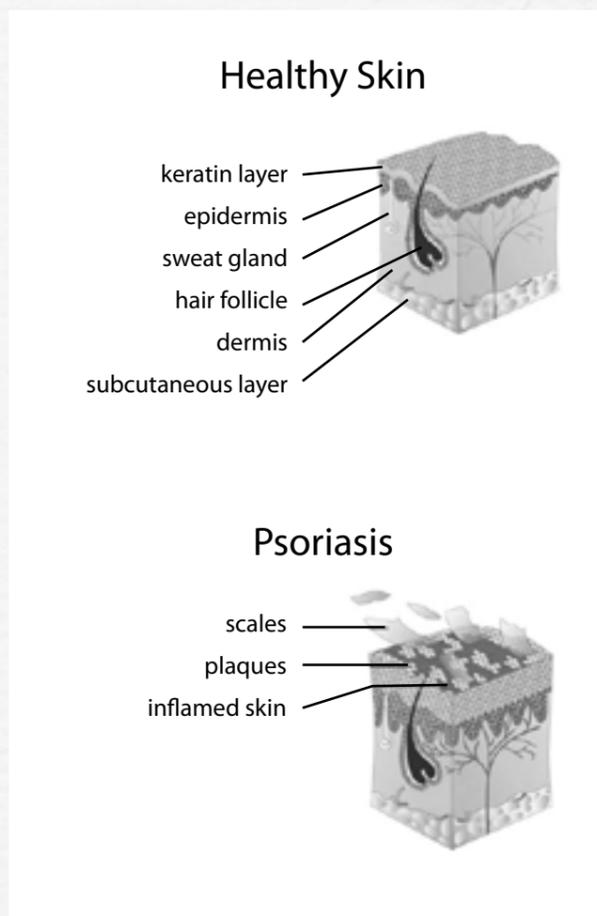
Psoriasis is more commonly developed by those with a *pitta* constitution. It involves an increased production of skin cells which relates to *pitta's* speedy metabolism. Though psoriasis' exact medical cause is unknown, Ayurveda links it to poor metabolism of fats and proteins, which results in blood impurities struggling to escape through the skin. If the liver is strong however, the impurities will be effectively broken down and eliminated. Therefore, Ayurvedic treatment focuses on bitter blood purifiers and liver tonics such as *neem*, turmeric, sarsaparilla, aloe vera, *manjishtha*, Indian myrrh, dandelion, and gotu cola. To ease the itching and remove scaliness, coconut based oils with herbs such as chickweed, cardamom, and *dantapala* are useful. A body therapy called *takra-dhara* is very effective for removing heat and reducing stress — it entails the continuous pouring of herbalized buttermilk over the forehead.

Lifestyle changes

Though obstinate, psoriasis can go into remission fairly rapidly. Foods to omit include yoghurt, meat, eggs, chilies, cayenne, paprika, garlic, onions, alcohol, sugar, caffeine, nicotine, refined flours, tomatoes, and citrus fruits. This cools the body and reduces skin cell hyperactivity. Daily swimming in salt water and exposing the area to UV sunlight can help. However, always wear a protective sunscreen to prevent skin cancer. Placing green clay on the affected areas for 20 minutes daily, then washing off with cold water, draws toxins from the subcutaneous layer. A diet rich in vitamins A, B complex, C, D, essential fatty acids, zinc, magnesium, and calcium is beneficial. Since stress aggravates psoriasis it is important to cultivate a stress management technique such as meditation, guided relaxation, or tai chi.

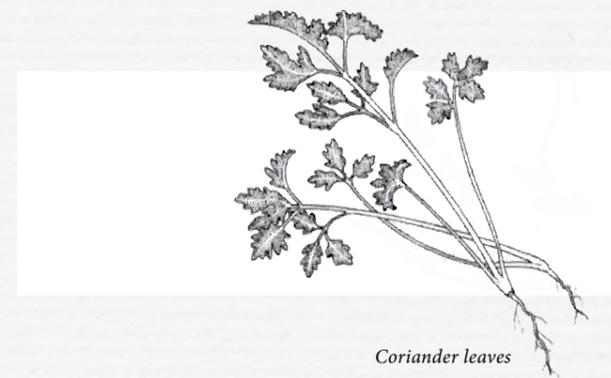
Case study

Jason was a 37-year-old *pitta* constitution who had suffered from psoriasis on the scalp and face since a teenager. He was given chickweed, sandalwood, and coconut based shampoo to clear the scalp scales and itching. He applied coconut and evening primrose oil to his face. The biggest dietary change was to give up alcohol. He was happy to shave his head temporarily and go for a daily swim in the sea. After 3 weeks of this regime Jason's psoriasis was clearer than it had ever been.



Sinusitis & hay fever

Hay fever is predominantly caused by a *vata* and *kapha* imbalance. *Vata* aggravation leads to hypersensitivity of the capillary membranes, and the resultant swelling and mucus results from accumulated *kapha*. A hay fever sufferer has a weak and overactive autoimmune system due to toxins coating the channels. This creates a fertile field for allergens to flourish. The Ayurvedic approach is to cleanse the membranes, balance the immune response,



Coriander leaves

and strengthen the membrane's resistance. Cleansing is done with practices such as supervised vomiting (*va-mana*), nasal irrigation with warm salty water (*jala-neti*), eye baths, and eye drops. Colon cleansing is also important using herbs such as *triphala*, castor oil, or senna. The immune response can be pacified with herbs such as coriander leaves, *shirisha*, turmeric, black cumin, fenugreek, holy basil, golden seal, and echinacea. To fortify membranes there are excellent Ayurvedic nasal drops called *anu thailam*, containing 28 herbs, goats milk, and sesame oil. Alternatively, warm ghee can be dropped in the nostrils.

Lifestyle changes

To overcome hay fever the irritant should be identified and eliminated. However, sometimes the irritant is not obvious or it is impossible to avoid. Some ways you can reduce common household allergens is to cover mattresses, steam clean or remove carpets, avoid curtains, keep pets outside, avoid fresh flowers, clean mould from the bathroom regularly, and use chemical free cleaners. Food allergies are another trigger for hay fever. Common foods include nuts, dairy, shellfish, processed food, red wine, and refined flours. Foods that act as natural anti-histamines and channel dilators can be taken. These include onions, garlic, licorice, chili, horseradish, coriander leaf, and parsley.

Case study

Joel was a 31-year-old hay fever sufferer with a *vata* constitution. He was noticeably worse in spring and after dairy products. He prepared the coriander chutney described in *Coriander Home Remedies* and took it daily with lunch. Joel also practiced nasal irrigation and used *anu* nasal drops every morning. This, coupled with the elimination of dairy from his diet, made a marked improvement on his symptoms.

Stress & hypertension

Faced with physical or emotional challenges our natural instinct is to react with the flight, fright, or fight response. This reaction is possible through the secretion of stress hor-

mones from the adrenal glands such as adrenaline and norepinephrine. Periods of prolonged stress can cause a syndrome called "adrenal exhaustion" — a *vata* imbalance resulting from the excessive secretion of stress hormones. This makes a person hypersensitive to stress, as they do not have the reserves to respond effectively, a dilemma experienced by many sufferers of chronic fatigue syndrome.

Ayurveda teaches that humans are different from animals in that we can rationalize situations rather than automatically reacting at the whim of baser instincts such as fear or anger. By viewing challenges from a positive perspective rather than always feeling threatened, we can alleviate most stresses. This requires faith that in the long-term whatever happens to us is for a meaningful and beneficial purpose. Working as if everything depended on us, but feeling like everything depends on divine forces, allows a kind of active detachment that greatly relieves stress. While cultivating this new perspective, Ayurveda offers herbs to manage hypertension, nervous debility, and anxiety often associated with stress. These include *arjuna*, snake root, chamomile, vervain, valerian, *ashwagandha*, ginseng, hawthorn berry, *brahmi*, licorice, and garlic.

Lifestyle changes

Ayurveda excels in teaching ways to diffuse and avoid stress. We can reduce stress by keeping daily goals realistic, managing money sensibly, looking after our health, limiting exposure to the news, and sharing burdens with a loving partner. A relaxed body is the gateway to a serene mind. Calm body language actually triggers the release of relaxing and pleasurable neurotransmitters throughout the body, reducing stress accumulation. To make relaxation readily accessible daily self-massage, meditation, *pranayama*, Qi-gong, yoga, pleasurable music, chanting, and prayers are invaluable. Warm baths with Epsom salts and calming essential oils such as lavender or chamomile help to release physical tension.

Case study

George was a *pitta* constitution, type A personality, corporate executive. He was suffering from stress that resulted in high blood pressure, headaches, and psoriasis. He also had a volatile temper that created havoc at work and home. Since George had not taken a holiday in six years that was the first prescription. He went to a yoga retreat in a beautiful location where he could receive massage, exercise, and meditation instruction. This two week sojourn was just what George needed to change his perspective on life. He decided to reduce his working hours and spend more leisure time with his family and friends. To keep his blood pressure under control George stopped drinking alcohol and cut stimulants such as sugar, salt, caffeine, and nicotine from his diet.

(to be continued in the next issue)

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trapped within is an important part of dealing with trauma. Such discharge helps the nervous system to regain its balance. Some examples of what the body does when it is discharging over-stimulation include:

- Stomach gurgling.
 - Breathing deeply or sighing.
 - Crying or laughing.
 - Trembling, shaking, or sweating.
 - Giving off heat.
- Such physical symptoms sometimes feel strange or uncomfortable, but they will usually stop by themselves if we do not fight them. These symptoms are good because they could mean that the body is discharging some of the traumatic energy and coming back into balance. Generally, what is needed is just to try to observe what is happening in the body without judgment, simply watching and understanding that the body has an innate ability to heal if we just allow it to feel what it feels, giving it the time to do what it needs to do.
 - It is useful to avoid getting stuck in obsessive thinking and behavior. One can be aware of such thoughts and behavior, accepting them as a natural part of being deeply upset, but at the same time being aware that the distressing feelings will pass.
 - In an accident or disaster situation, one should get information about loved ones as soon as possible, but only watch the news for limited periods. Try not to get hooked on traumatic images. One can also stay active and volunteer help or give blood. It is best not to be isolated — get together with family and friends, or religious and community groups for support.
 - If someone is dissociated or disconnected after a trauma, it can help to talk about concrete things. Re-associating reconnects one with important biological resources. If someone is very dissociated, he or she will need help from others to reconnect with the present.
 - Emotional support and understanding for the effects of trauma include helping someone deal with their emotions and with any symptoms (e.g., nightmares, physical pain, and insomnia).
 - For children, the intensity and time duration of symptoms depends mainly on how their parents or primary care-givers react and how they treat the child. Not surprisingly, if children are believed and protected, they will do better than if they are ignored or shamed.

Exercises

After a traumatic experience it is important to stay as grounded as possible. If you feel disoriented, confused, or upset, you can do the following simple exercises:

- 1) Sit on a chair. Take your time to feel your feet on the ground. Feel that you are sitting on a seat, and that your back is supported by the chair. Gently press your thighs.

Look around and find six objects of the same color. This helps to be more present, grounded, and in your body. Notice how your breathing is and see if it gets deeper and calmer.

- 2) Gently pat the different parts of your body with your hands. As a result, your body may feel tingly, alive, sharp, and you may feel more connected to your feelings. See if you can feel your body as a “container” that can hold your feelings.
- 3) Slowly and carefully tighten and release your muscles, one group at a time. Hold your shoulders with your arms across the chest and gently squeeze your arms. Do the same with your legs, holding them from the outside, squeezing down their length. This can help to feel more balanced.

In addition, physical exercise can help us avoid depression and act as a channel for any anger present. We can also pray for others involved, for healing, and for consolation. We can also pray for peace, understanding, wisdom, and for the forces of goodness to prevail.

CASE HISTORY

Brian had multiple symptoms from the various traumas that he had experienced, including complete loss of sensation of his left ear. To him it felt like “dead meat.” This distressing symptom had occurred during a crucial operation seven years previously to remove a brain tumor. Subsequently, the doctors told him that during the course of the operation the nerve to his ear had been cut and that the loss of feeling was therefore irreversible. However, during the course of a 40 minute trauma healing session with a trained therapist, full sensation came back to his ear and has remained ever since. One explanation for this is that, as a result of the surgery, Brian’s body was traumatized and consequently his brain cut off (or dissociated) its perception of the ear. However, when enough traumatic energy connected to this particular issue was discharged from Brian’s body, his brain could again recognize the sensations coming from the ear because it no longer felt like a “danger zone” that the brain needed to block out.

Although this is certainly an amazing story, it is not unique. There are many cases whereby symptoms that people have been suffering from for years, and which seemed incurable, were either alleviated or went away as a result of trauma therapy. Of course, it can take more than one session to achieve this, especially when a client has multiple traumas. Nevertheless, with the right kind of intervention, symptoms can be relieved in both an effective and gentle way.

Kancana-valli Devi Dasi is trained as a trauma therapist in the Somatic Experiencing model, Re-evaluation Co-counseling, mediation, Systemic Family Constellations, and meridian therapy. She is presently living in Radhadesh, Belgium, and can be contacted at: kancana-valli.srs@pamho.net.

High IQ link to being vegetarian

BBC NEWS (Friday, 15 December 2006)

Intelligent children are more likely to become vegetarians later in life, a study says.

A Southampton University team found those who were vegetarian by 30 had recorded five IQ points more on average at the age of 10. Researchers said it could explain why people with higher IQ were healthier, as a vegetarian diet was linked to lower heart disease and obesity rates.

The study of 8,179 [test participants] was reported in the *British Medical Journal*. Twenty years after the IQ tests were carried out in 1970, 366 of the participants said they were vegetarian — although more than 100 reported eating either fish or chicken. Men who were vegetarian had an IQ score of 106, compared with 101 for non-vegetarians; while female vegetarians averaged 104, compared with 99 for non-vegetarians.

There was no difference in IQ score between strict vegetarians and those who said they were vegetarian but who reported eating fish or chicken. Researchers said the findings were partly related to better education and higher occupational social class, but it remained statistically significant after adjusting for these factors.

Vegetarians were more likely to be female, to be of higher occupational social class, and to have higher academic or vocational qualifications than non-vegetarians. However, these differences were not reflected in their annual income, which was similar to that of non-vegetarians.

Lead researcher Catharine Gale said, “The finding that children with greater intelligence are more likely to report being vegetarian as adults, together with the evidence on the potential benefits of a vegetarian diet on heart health, may help to explain why higher IQ in childhood or adolescence is linked with a reduced risk of coronary heart disease in adult life.”

Intelligence

However, she added the link may be merely an example of many other lifestyle preferences that might be expected to vary with intelligence, such as choice of newspaper, but which may or may not have implications for health.



Liz O’Neill, of the Vegetarian Society, said, “We’ve always known that vegetarianism is an intelligent, compassionate choice benefiting animals, people, and the environment. Now we’ve got the scientific evidence to prove it. Maybe that explains why many meat-reducers are keen to call

“We’ve always known that vegetarianism is an intelligent, compassionate choice benefiting animals, people, and the environment.”

— Liz O’Neill, of *The Vegetarian Society*

themselves vegetarians when even they must know that vegetarians don’t eat chicken, turkey, or fish.”

But Dr Frankie Phillips, of the British Dietetic Association, said: “It is like the chicken and the egg. Do people become vegetarian because they have a very high IQ or is it just that they tend to be more aware of health issues?”

Link:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/health/6180753.stm>

MP3 players can seriously damage your health!

Dan Nicolae Alexa (Playfuls.com)



Although increasingly popular these days among youngsters MP3 players can produce irreversible damage to the internal ear. This is what a study conducted in Britain has found out: people today are likely to lose their hearing thirty years earlier than the previous generation, thanks in part to the ubiquitous personal audio player.

Deafness Research UK and Specsavers Hearcare said a national survey in Britain showed that 14 per cent of 16 to 34 year-olds use their personal music players for 28 hours a week.

The study was conducted on more than 1000 people and it discovered that over a third of them listen to MP3 players (like iPod) everyday despite having experienced tinnitus, a ringing in the ears which is a classic sign of hearing damage. Half (54 per cent) of 16 to 24 year-olds listen to their MP3 player for more than an hour a day, and almost 20 per cent spend more than 21 hours a week plugged in.

But certainly the most surprising and alarming was the finding that 38 per cent of 16 to 34 year-olds was not aware that listening to loud music on a personal music player can seriously and irreversibly damage their hearing. Vivienne Michael, chief executive of Deafness Research UK, said, "A generation ago we would see people going deaf in their 60s or 70s, but we're now seeing more people going deaf in their 40s, which is very worrying. Many young people are regularly using MP3 players for long periods and are frighteningly unaware of the fact that loud noise can permanently damage your hearing."

According to Vivienne Michael loud music and medium, but constant, noise destroy the hair cells in the ears that pick up sounds and allow hearing. These cells gradually die anyway in old age but exposure to loud noises accelerates hearing loss — which is irreversible.

The louder the noise and the longer the exposure, the more hair cells are destroyed, she added. "People don't take it seriously enough. The Health and Safety Executive says any noise above 105 decibels can permanently damage your hearing, but the maximum volume on many MP3 players

is up to 120 decibels — as loud as an ambulance siren.

"We advise a 60-60 rule — don't listen at more than 60 per cent of the maximum volume and don't listen for more than an hour. Another rule of thumb is if your music is so loud that other people can hear it then it's too loud — turn it down. Hearing loss can make life unbearable. We want people to realize that their hearing is as important as their sight and protect their ears against any potential damage. We don't want the MP3 generation to go deaf in their 30s or 40s."

The extensive study also found out that 46.5 per cent of all 16 to 24 year-olds visit a nightclub at least once a week, and that four-fifths (82 per cent) of people who have experienced ringing in the ears — a sign of hearing damage — after listening to loud music also go to nightclubs.

The Royal National Institute for the Deaf has warned before about MP3 players and is now sustaining the conclusions of the recent survey. Chief executive Dr John Low of The Royal National Institute for the Deaf said, "This survey shows very clearly that young people are frighteningly unaware of the dangers of listening to their MP3 players too loudly. If young people don't heed our warnings about safer listening, they could end up facing premature hearing damage. New technology and ever-increasing storage capacity enables people to listen non-stop for hours — and at louder volumes than ever before. If you are regularly plugged in, it is only too easy to clock up noise doses that could damage your hearing forever."

Tinnitus, or "ringing ears," is a phenomenon of the nervous system connected to the ear, characterized by perception of a ringing, beating, or roaring sound (often perceived as sinusoidal) with no external source.

Links:

American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery: www.entnet.org/healthinfo/hearing/tinnitus.cfm
British Tinnitus Association: www.tinnitus.org.uk
American Tinnitus Association: www.ata.org



I WISH TO EXPRESS MY CONCERN regarding a matter that has worried me for a while: the *prasadam* served in our temples. I do understand that *prasadam* is transcendental, laced with the saliva of the Lord, and as such one can derive great spiritual benefit from consuming such foodstuffs. However, the cause of my alarm lies in its external effects, most prominently the detrimental effect *prasadam* can have on the health of devotees.

It has been observed by many that there are a number of health related problems devotees fall victim to within the (ISKCON) society, and a significant proportion of this can be attributed to the high fat content in the *prasadam*. My concern is that excessive quantities of ghee, oil, and sugar can lead to various health problems including coronary heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes which are, to varying degrees, brought about by a build-up of atherosclerotic plaques.

I have heard that many of the preparations made in our temples are those that were made and offered to the Lord by Srila Prabhupada himself. Given this, but in an effort to better avoid the problems mentioned before, I would humbly request that the GBC consider directing or promoting an initiative for temples worldwide to cut down on the content of these unhealthy items in *prasadam*, rather than replacing the preparations themselves.

I was told once that Srila Prabhupada mentioned a hierarchy whereby health preceded *sadhana* and service. With your blessings, hopefully more of us can take this to heart in order to conduct our duties accordingly, leading to a long

and healthy life of productive devotional service. I feel that a healthy diet forms one of the main pillars of such a life.

I would appreciate your meditations, feedback, and guidance on this issue, and sincerely thank you for taking the time out of your no doubt busy schedule to read this letter.

Bhuta Bhavana Dasa, London, UK

Response

Although *prasadam* is transcendental, it will also have a material effect on our material bodies according to the consciousness of the cook and eater, the quality of the *prasadam*, and the ingredients used in preparing it. It would certainly be beneficial for devotees within ISKCON if temple cooks would pay more attention to the health concerns of the devotees. In many ISKCON temples, there is often too much white sugar, white flour, and fried food. What's more, often the vegetables are of poor quality and when fruit is served, it is often out of season and unripe. Devotees accustomed to this diet may not complain, and when they do their complaints often go unnoticed.

Concerned devotees can, however, try to inform the devotee community and temple administrators about the advantages of a healthy diet and the problems surrounding unhealthy diets. Descriptions of healthy and unhealthy diets can be found in our Health and Welfare magazines which can be downloaded for free at iskcon.net.au/iskconhealth. Hope all is well.

Prahladananda Swami

Chant:

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

and be happy!

***Hope This Meets You
— in Good Health —***

The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry

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