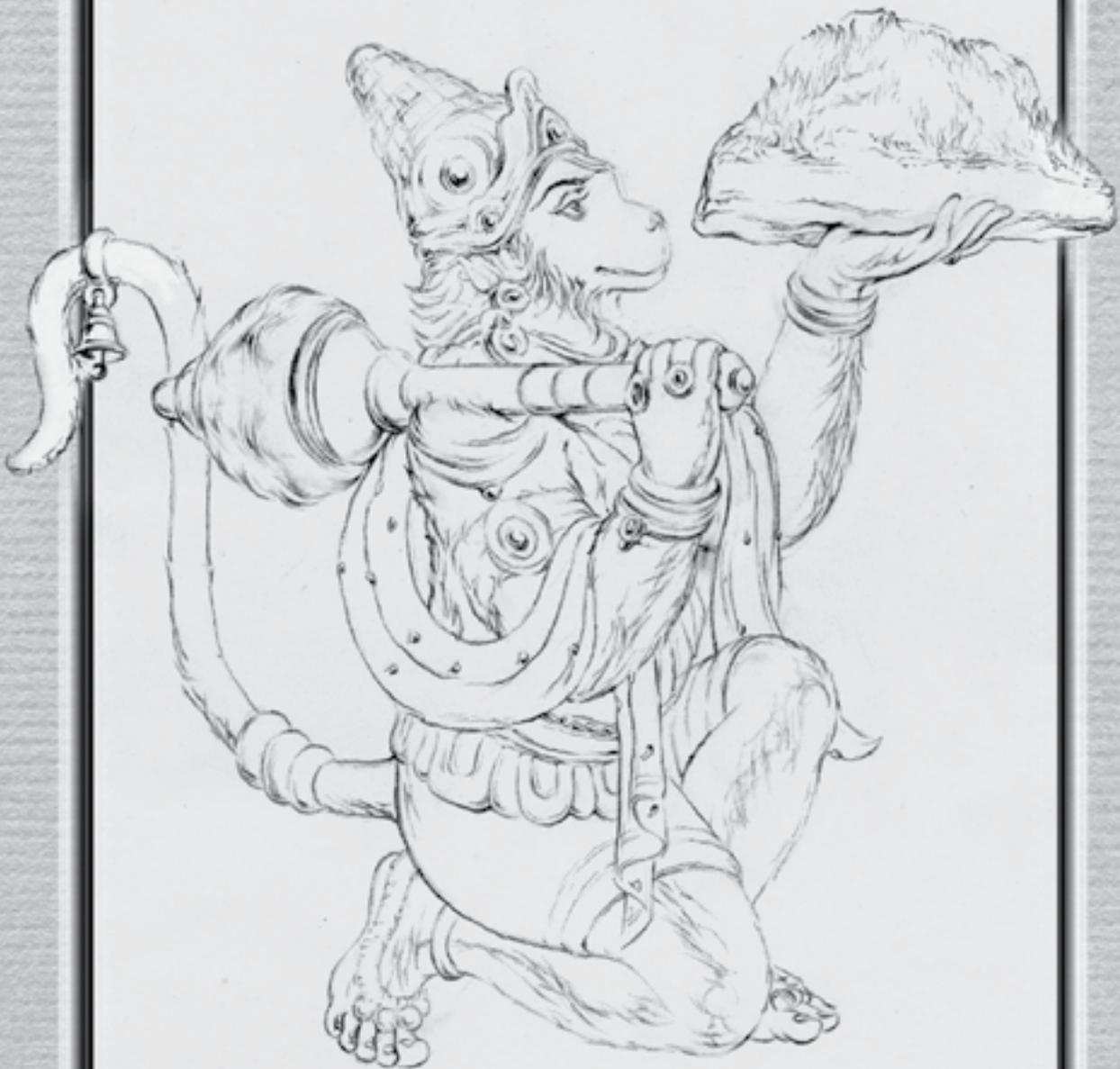


*Hope This Meets You
— in Good Health —*



The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry

Issue No. 12 / 2006

Message from the Minister

Srila Prabhupada was concerned about his disciples' health. As he wrote to Rayarama Dasa in December 1967, "Be careful about your health first. This information is not only for you but all my noble sons. I am an old man. I may live or die; it does not matter. But you must live for a long time to push on this Krishna Consciousness movement." To maintain one's health, Srila Prabhupada especially advised a simple regulated diet, freedom from unnecessary anxiety, and cleanliness. If we neglect our health then our *sadhana* will suffer, and although we might be very sincere to render service we may not be able or inspired to do so.

One tendency in ISKCON has been to neglect our health in our youth and to sometimes over-emphasize it when we grow older. However, a balanced approach to health and service when we are still young would help us to maximize our service in later years. Lord Krishna advised Arjuna to follow a path of regulation, not to eat too much or too little, sleep too much or too little, do too much activity or too little. This balance is essential for steady good health and assists in our attempts for consistent devotional service in consciousness of Lord Krishna.

In the service of Srila Prabhupada,
Prahlanananda Swami
ISKCON Minister for Health and Welfare

Disclaimer

- The articles in this magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the Health and Welfare Ministry.
- The magazine is not intended to treat, diagnosis any illness or disease, nor prescribe any remedy or medicine.
- 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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Quotes from Srila Prabhupada



One should cease performing conventional religious practices and should be attracted to those which lead to salvation. One should eat very frugally and should always remain secluded so that he can achieve the highest perfection of life.

PURPORTThe next important phrase is *mita-medhyadanam*, which means that one should eat very frugally. It is recommended in the Vedic literatures that a *yogi* eat only half what he desires according to his hunger. If one is so hungry that he could devour one pound of foodstuffs, then instead of eating one pound, he should consume only half a pound and supplement this with four ounces of water; one fourth of the stomach should be left empty for passage of air in the stomach. If one eats in this manner, he will avoid indigestion and disease. The *yogi* should eat in this way, as recommended in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and all other standard scriptures.
— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.28.3, purport.

I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities, and I join with the air of life, outgoing and incoming, to digest the four kinds of foodstuff.

PURPORT According to Ayurvedic *sastra*, we understand that there is a fire in the stomach which digests all food sent there. When the fire is not blazing there is no hunger, and when the fire is in order we become hungry. Sometimes when the fire is not going nicely, treatment is required. In any case, this fire is representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Vedic mantras (*Brhad-aran-yaka Upanisad* 5.9.1) also confirm that the Supreme Lord or Brahman is situated in the form of fire within the stomach and is digesting all kinds of foodstuff (*ayam agnir vaisvanaro yo 'yam antah puruse yenedam annam pacyate*). Therefore since He is helping the digestion of all kinds of foodstuff, the living entity is not independent in the eating process. Unless the Supreme Lord helps him in

digesting, there is no possibility of eating. He thus produces and digests foodstuff, and by His grace we are enjoying life. In the *Vedanta-sutra* (1.2.27) this is also confirmed. *Sabdadbhyo 'ntah pratisthanac ca*: the Lord is situated within sound and within the body, within the air and even within the stomach as the digestive force. There are four kinds of foodstuff — some are drunk, some are chewed, some are licked up, and some are sucked — and He is the digestive force for all of them.
— *Bhagavad-gita* 15.14, purport.

So you must live up to the rules and regulations of brahminical life. First and foremost is cleanliness. In your country they have so many filthy habits. For example, they don't wash after eating. A *brahmana* does not do like that. If he did so in India, he would be highly criticized. So even if you eat a little, still you must wash immediately. And the place that you eat at must be washed off immediately also.

— Srila Prabhupada, letter to Laksmi Narayana, July 8, 1971, Los Angeles.

Devotee: "One who seeks an improvement in health or aspires . . ."

Prabhupada: Generally this yoga practice goes on in the name of improving health. Somebody goes to reduce fat. You see? Reduce fat. Because you are rich nation, you eat more and become fatty and again pay yoga practice fees and reduce your fat. That is going on. I have seen some advertisement the other day, "Reduce your fat." Why you increase your fat? The nonsense! they will not understand. That if I have to reduce it, why do I increase it? Why not be satisfied with simple foodstuff? If you eat grains and vegetables and light foodstuffs, you'll never get fatty. You see? You'll never get fatty. Reduce eating as much as possible. Don't eat at night. Practice yoga like this. If you become voracious eater, you'll be . . .

There are two kinds of diseases. The voracious eaters, they are attacked with diabetes and those who cannot eat sufficiently,

they [will get] tubercul[osis]. So you cannot eat more or you cannot eat less. You just eat what you require. If you eat more then you must be diseased. And if you eat less, you must be diseased. That will be explained. *Yuktahara-viharasya yogo bhavati siddhi...* You are not to starve, but don't eat more. Our program, *krsna-prasada*, is that you eat *krsna-prasada*. Eating is required; you have to keep your body fit for any practice. So eating is required. But don't eat more. Don't eat less also. We don't say that you eat less. If you can eat ten pounds, eat. But if you cannot eat ten pounds, out of avarice, out of greediness you eat pounds, then you will suffer. You see?

— Srila Prabhupada, lecture on *Bhagavad-gita* 6.13-15, February 16, 1969.

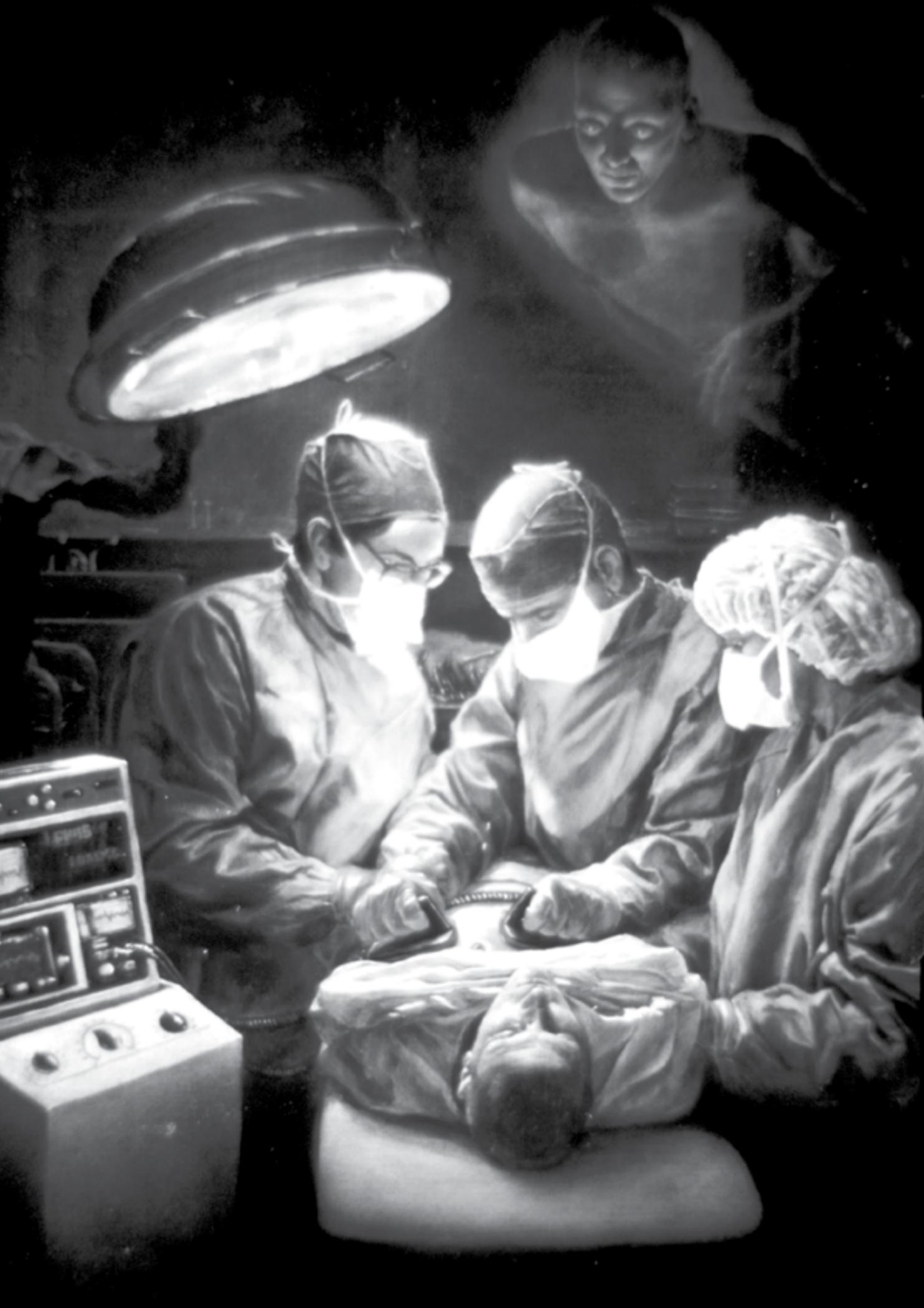
Just by treating the root cause of an ailment, one can conquer all bodily pains and sufferings. Similarly, if one is devoted and faithful to the spiritual master, he can conquer the influence of *sattva-guna*, *rajo-guna* and *tamo-guna* very easily.
— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 7.15.25, purport.

By keeping regular habits and eating simple food, any man can maintain his health. Overeating, over-sense gratification, overdependence on another's mercy, and artificial standards of living sap the very vitality of human energy. Therefore the duration of life is shortened.

— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.1.10, purport.

Disease is to be cured, is to be driven away. In Hindi they say, *jara ar para okhane kha na baviya ar*. (?) Means "Unwanted guest and disease, you do not give him to eat, and he will go away." He will go away. So any disease, you starve for few days, two days, three days, it will go. And any unwanted guest, you don't supply him food. He will automatically go away. So disease should not be maintained. Disease should be cured.

— Srila Prabhupada, lecture on *Bg.* 7.2, March 10, 1975, London •



HEALTH CARE OR UGRAKARMA?

END OF LIFE Ethical Considerations in Āyurveda

Nimai Nitai Dasa

Sooner or later, every Ayurvedic preceptor and practitioner must answer inevitable queries from a student or patient regarding extreme medical interventions. Although I have responded often to such questions over two decades of instruction and practice, a recent inquiry from an allopathic medical student has triggered a deeper examination of the ontological and moral underpinnings that inform Ayurvedic ethics.

An Indian student currently in the midst of a rotation as part of her residency in organ transplanta-

tion at a leading medical school in Boston recently participated in "harvesting" a working heart from a 12-year-old boy in a persistent and irreversible vegetative state. Her questions were both sober and sobering:

Does the removal of the live heart constitute hatya (killing, slaying)? What is the Ayurvedic perspective on donating organs after death? What are the implications for the jiva (soul) upon leaving the body, if one or more organs are transplanted and the rest of the body is cremated?

What are the implications for organ recipients? If the body is so ill that vital organs are beyond repair, should we accept that as an indication to forego the transplant and simply prepare for death?

The traditional Vedic understanding is that the *jiva* (soul) resides in the heart (*Prashna Upanishad* 3.6)¹: “The self (*atman*) resides within the very heart” (Olivelle, p. 283). *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* 4.3.7: “It is this person — the one that consists of perception among the vital functions (*prana*), the one that is the inner light within the heart.” (Olivelle, p. 59). When the *jiva* departs the heart, that is the actual moment of physical death. There is no mention in the *sastra* of any other measure or standard for ascertaining physical death (*Chandogya Upanishad* 6.11.3): “. . . know that this, of course, dies when it is bereft of life (*jiva*). . . .” (Olivelle, p. 154). So, if the heart is beating, one must conclude that the *jiva* is animating the body, and harvesting the organ is considered *hatya*, killing.

Donating organs after death does not involve killing the patient, but does present other problems. The *jiva* (except in the case of divine personalities, such as *paramahansa sannyasis*) is attached to its physical frame, and will hover and linger over it while that body is still in a recognizable form, even after physical death. Therefore, cremation is meant to accelerate the process of disintegration of the material form. As a rule, the skull is crushed during cremation, so that the incineration is complete and the life force together with the senses (traditionally known as the *pranas*) are properly released. Thus, those who are attached to embodied life should not donate their organs, as their *sukshma sharira* (subtle body consisting of mind, intelligence, and ego) and *karana sharira* (causal body consisting of *ahankara*, false ego) may transfer such attachment to the physical body of the recipient. Conversely, and for the same reasons, anyone receiving

organ donations is subject to the influence of the donor’s *sukshma* and *karana shariras*.

Important as these specific considerations are, the central issue raised by these questions is: To what extent should we resist the natural processes of aging, decay, and death? When should we accept the inevitable? The *sastra* clearly says, “One who has taken his birth is sure to die” (*Bhagavad-gita* 2.27). And that is certainly the uncontroverted experience of all embodied beings throughout history. We do not and cannot “save lives”, we can only postpone death — but at what personal and social cost?

Organ transplantation is but one of the medical procedures that unquestionably fall in the category that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has labeled “extraordinary endeavors to keep body and soul together.” Not only do they constitute *bhukti* (attachment to and gratification of the physical and subtle bodies), but they should also be avoided as *ugra karma*, a term defined as “difficult action with limited rewards.”

End of Life

The death process follows the following general pattern, although some stages can be abbreviated to the point of imperceptibility, while others can be extended considerably.

In the terminally ill, *prana* (life force) becomes debilitated and begins to withdraw from the *sthula sharira* (physical body). This is the first stage of the process of dying. In most patients, this gradual retreat of *prana* is accomplished in an orderly fashion, with the life force withdrawing in set ways: from the periphery to the center; from less vital to more vital organs; and from the lower torso towards the head. Once *prana* has retreated from the physical body, the *karmendriyas* (faculties of action) are inoperative.

The second stage consists of the withdrawal of *prana* into the *sukshma sharira*. When *prana* retreats from the *jnanendriyas* (faculties of perception), the patient

loses awareness of the external environment and sinks into unconsciousness.

In the third stage, *prana* withdraws into the *karana sharira*. Because the *sukshma sharira* is incapable of exerting its organizing influence over the physical body through the medium of *prana*, the four elemental states of matter begin to disintegrate. (The fifth state, ether or space, is the field in which the other four states manifest, and because it has no parts it cannot disintegrate.)

*Dhatu*s (bodily tissues) in the solid state lose cohesion, and the patient experiences a corresponding loss of body consciousness. Then the *dhatu*s in the liquid state disperse, causing the mucous membranes to desiccate. As the *dhatu*s in the radiant state disintegrate, the body loses warmth, and rigor starts to set in. Finally, the *dhatu*s in the gaseous state dissolve, and the patient expires. It is at this point that the *jiva* leaves the heart and is carried away by the *sukshma sharira*.

Ayurvedic practitioners aware of this orderly process can be immensely helpful to patients and their families, assuaging their fears and reassuring them of the immortality of the *jiva*, even in the midst of this experience. Chanting the Lord’s names, recitation of prayers, scriptural readings, and the performance of other religious rites (according to the faith of the patient) are highly recommended and constitute an integral part of Ayurvedic care of terminal patients.

Of course, palliative measures, that is, measures that provide symptomatic relief but no cure, can and should be employed whenever possible to mitigate pain and suffering, but the clouding of consciousness through the use of excessive therapies or medicines that relieve or allay pain should be avoided, as a conscious exit from this plane is beneficial for spiritual evolution. Death should be approached as *sadhana* (spiritual practice) by patients, relatives, and the Ayurvedic practitioner.

Prolongation of Life

Ayurveda classifies disease as either *sadhya* (remediable) or *asadhya* (irremediable). Among irremediable diseases, some are *yapya* (chronic but manageable, such as diabetes), and others are *pratyakheya* (terminal, such as metastasized cancer). In terminal conditions, Ayurveda considers that only palliative measures are indicated.

DNR Orders

Ayurvedic practitioners accept the natural rhythm of life and death and do not engage in *ugra karma* to prolong life (or suffering) at great effort and expense. An informed patient with a terminal condition should discuss his or her preferences, and make legal provisions to ensure that they will be respected. If the patient has given an explicit Do-Not-Resuscitate order (DNR), it is the duty of the Ayurvedic practitioner to assist in its observance.

Removal of Life Support

According to Vedic principles, removal of life support systems is justified when the assistive device is the major impediment to the death process. Ayurveda also allows for suspension of hydration and nourishment at the request of a terminally ill patient who chooses to fast, even if such fasting will accelerate death. *Prayopavesha*, voluntary fasting unto death for those who are terminally ill, is to be undertaken only under the authority and with the blessings of senior members of the patient’s faith.

Assisted Suicide

Ayurvedic ethics do not condone so-called assisted suicide, deliberately causing the death of a patient at his or her request by any lethal means. If requested by the patient, Ayurvedic practitioners may describe — but not actively recommend — *prayopavesha* (voluntary fasting unto death) as a viable means to abbreviate prolonged suffering.

(continued on page 19)

¹ This translation and those of the following Upanishadic passages are taken from: Olivelle, Patrick. *Upanisads*. New York: OUP, 1998.

COULD YOU SAY THAT AGAIN?



NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS IN ISKCON

a follow-up report by Jayadvaita Swami

(January 2006)

Twelve years ago, I distributed to all the members of the ISKCON GBC what I called “a preliminary report” on noise-induced hearing loss in ISKCON.

According to audiologists, the report explained, prolonged, and repeated exposure to “loud” sound — that is, sound above a certain decibel level — places one at high risk of gradually losing one’s hearing.

The usual sound level of ISKCON’s *kirtanas*, the report said, well exceeds the levels authorities consider “safe.” So if you’re a practicing member of ISKCON your hearing stands at high risk.

Hearing loss, the report said, creeps up imperceptibly, and by the time you notice its effects it’s too late; the damage cannot be reversed.

But hearing loss can be prevented. And the standard way is through a Hearing Conservation Program, consisting of seven parts:

1. Measuring the level of exposure
2. Controlling the level of sound
3. Testing the hearing of your people
4. Seeing to the use of ear protectors
5. Educating and motivating your people
6. Keeping records
7. Reviewing the results of your program

The report briefly told what each part entails. It mentioned that such programs have been in place in all branches of the U.S. military since the 1950s and are required by law in American industry. The costs for such a program, the report explained, are close to negligible.

Now, twelve years later, what progress have we made?

My report, I believe, made some devotees better aware of the risk of noise-induced hearing loss. Some began regularly using personal hearing protectors (earplugs). A few temples somewhat turned down the amps. Ultra-large *karatalas* became a less-admired fashion.

A few devotees had their hearing checked. Some discovered that noise-induced hearing loss had already cut into what they can hear. Some now use hearing aids. One of our best *kirtana* leaders has been afflicted by chronic and seriously disturbing tinnitus (“ringing in the ears”), an effect my report had warned of.

Yet while some temples have turned the volume down, others have turned it up. And in the wake of the vogue for oversized *karatalas* has come a passion for African drums loud enough to drown out *mrdangas*.

In short, since twelve years ago little has changed. The hearing of ISKCON’s members stands as much at risk now as then. And to my knowledge no ISKCON temple — and, more sadly, no ISKCON school — has undertaken a systematic hearing conservation program.

To do the sensible things to conserve the hearing of our devotees, where should we start? Twelve years ago I wrote of the efforts needed, “In these efforts the first step — obvious but easily overlooked — is for the person or governing body in charge to take them seriously.” Arguably, that’s a first step still yet to be taken.

My preliminary report, submitted twelve years ago, seems to have gone mostly unheard. I wonder: Should I perhaps be shouting?

Respectfully,
Jayadvaita Swami

NOTE: My preliminary report is available online at www.jswami.info/hearing_loss.

More easily remembered: You can find it from my web page — www.jswami.info •



Raga Manjari Devi Dasi

Post-natal Pampering

“A new mother should be treated with massage, warm baths, a specific diet, and herbal drinks that prevent infection, promote vitality, and alleviate vata.”

— Charaka Semite - sarira sthanam

India has a wonderful tradition wherein a pregnant woman stays with her parents three months before and after having the baby to ensure that she gets abundant rest, support, and nurturing. This enables a woman to recover from the extraordinary mental and physical stresses placed on her through childbearing, allowing her the relaxed time and assistance needed to bond with the baby.

The ninety days after delivery are considered a vital, cleansing, recuperative period during which the mother should take complete rest to regain the strength and health of her pre-pregnancy state. This will give her the mental, emotional, and spiritual resources to cope with the demands of motherhood. It will also protect her and her baby from common health disorders associated with this time such as colic, insomnia, irritability, and post-natal depression. Even modern medicine acknowledges that it takes a women's body at least six weeks to re-

turn to normal after childbirth, hence the standard six-week post-natal check up. Mothers who are not able to recover properly run the risk of suffering long-term depletion and chronic childbearing-related weaknesses. Women are particularly vulnerable to post-natal depression if they lack proper rest and support at this time. The many challenges they face include fatigue, sleep deprivation, pain, anxiety, breastfeeding, worries about weight gain and feeling generally overwhelmed regarding the responsibilities of motherhood. Issues such as these contribute to the post-natal depression suffered by 80% of American women.

Childbirth and new motherhood tends to unbalance the elements of air and ether (*vata*) due to mental and physical strain, sleep deprivation, irregular eating and weak digestion after delivery. *Vata* is cold, dry, and active; hence the approach to rebalance it is with warm, unctuous, and restful therapies. If the mother is unhappy or unhealthy this affects the baby and the developing relationship between the mother and child. Conversely, a nurtured mother overflowing with joy and health showers that energy onto her child.

Ways to Restore Balance and Reduce Stress

- The mother should rest as much as possible for at least one month. Having a baby may be the beginning of the greatest love affair, but the end of sufficient sleep. To guard against exhaustion she should try to go to bed by 9 p.m. (or earlier) and do minimal exercise. Practicing *yoga nidra* is also very rejuvenating.
- To promote a peaceful lifestyle and reduce stimulation she should restrict the number of visitors; reduce talking; remain in a warm, quite environment sheltered from the cold and wind; avoid travel; and delegate domestic and work duties to caring helpers. Soliciting someone else's help with the shopping, laundry, cooking, and cleaning for at least a month will allow mum time to focus on her recovery and the baby's needs, without feeling swamped and depleted.
- The mother's digestion will reflect the baby's digestion, so special care should be taken to provide food that is lovingly prepared, light to digest, and rich in nutrition. Meals should

be regular, warm, cooked, organic, liquid, and gently spiced. Foods to favor include whole grains, stewed fruits, steamed vegetables, mung dhal, basmati rice, milk, ghee, almonds, raisins, dates, figs, palm sugar, and plenty of warm fluids such as chamomile or fennel tea.

- Digestive spices such as basil, bay leaf, caraway, cardamom, cinnamon, clove, coriander, cumin, fennel, fenugreek, ginger, hing, mustard seeds, pepper, and turmeric are good to stoke the digestive fire. Some foods disturb the mother's digestion and make breast milk more gas-forming and should therefore be avoided. Examples of such foods include cold, raw or fermented food, leftovers, broccoli, Brussels sprout, cabbage, capsicum, cauliflower, eggplant, garlic, onions, green peas, potatoes, sprouts, and most legumes (except for mung dhal).
- It is good if the new mother is massaged daily with warm herbal oils and then left to sleep for an hour. She can then take a bath with the therapeutic leaves of tamarind, jackfruit, castor, and neem. All these have anti-microbial and anti-viral properties. An aromatherapy alternative employs an elixir of rose, rosemary, lavender, cypress, and geranium essential oils. Jasmine is also good to prevent post-natal depression. Her belly is then bound with a cotton cloth to support the abdomen and uterus' return to normal. Post-natal massage helps the mother's body to reorganize itself; relaxes; promotes circulation; boosts immunity; conditions skin; soothes the nervous system; and returns muscles, ligaments, and bones back to normal. Another special treatment given after the normal daily massage for the first week is an herbal leaf poultice massage (*ilakizhi*). The poultice containing castor plant leaves, tamarind, *Vitex nigundo*, lime, and rock salt reduces body aches and improves muscle tone.
- Herbal tonics given at this time to restore the mother's energy, immunity, and promote quality breast milk include *chyavanaprasham* jam, *Asparagus racemosus* (*shatavari*), and *Withania somnifera* (*ashwagandha*).

Other classical preparations given to ease *vata* and promote digestion include *dhanwantaram* decoction plus tablets, *dasamoolarishtam* or *jeera-karishtam*.

- Many women suffer from constipation after delivery for which castor oil may be taken before bed to lubricate the bowels and encourage complete evacuation.
- Intercourse should be avoided for at least three months to allow the reproductive system recovery time. Pelvic floor exercises and yogic *moola bandha* can assist vaginal elasticity. To shrink the size of the vagina a douche of gooseberry (*amalaki*) decoction or fig leaf paste is used.
- Ayurveda considers the milk from the breast best, custom-made for the baby's specific needs. As soon as possible the baby should be put on the breast, as the initial colostrum, though heavy, is considered to be nectar. To increase milk production the mother can think of the baby with tender affection and take fenugreek, fennel, *shatavari*, milk, drumsticks, and ghee. If the baby is reluctant to drink breast milk, honey is put on the nipple for encouragement.
- For mastitis, warm cabbage leaves can be put in the bra and cracked nipples are eased with calendula and turmeric ointment.

The baby may be weaned off breast milk either after the teeth appear or continued according to the mother's preference. To dry up milk the mother can apply neem or jasmine leaf paste externally to her breasts.

Though it may seem unrealistically idyllic to follow these mother-care practices, since 1985 hundreds of mothers in the West have benefited from the Mother and Baby Program offered by Maharishi Ayurveda. American obstetrician Rebecca Douglas who experienced the Mother and Baby program after the birth of her third child now recommends it to clients believing it is “for the baby's well-being; it's not indulgence.” Douglas observed that for new mothers who follow the recommendations “enthusiasm seems much more predominant and the fatigue seems to be much less.” Former Mother and Baby

Program director Sharon Thomas saw the benefits for hundreds of mothers, “I never saw an instance of post-partum depression in all of the years I worked with this program.... Mothers looked healthier, more supported, more rested. Their ongoing good health seemed to continue for years.” Research conducted by psychologist Ragnhild Boes supports the effectiveness of the Mother and Baby Program. He found that the mothers in the program had better overall health, more confidence and happiness in new motherhood, enriched family relationships, and better physical and emotional stability than women in the control group. It may seem an unnecessary expense to have someone come and cook and massage, but mothers should see it as an investment for their future.

Blissful Babies

“A child is a curly-haired, dimpled lunatic.”
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

The initial six months of a baby's life are considered a crucial phase, during which the foundation of mental and physical fortitude is established. The transition from the womb to the world should be as gentle and tender as possible. The situation babies have been in could be likened to spending nine months in dark solitary confinement, hence they need time to adapt to sensory input. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.31 describes the discomfort suffered by the baby in the womb who, likened to a bird trapped in a cage, appeals to the Lord, “I, the pure soul, appearing now bound by my activities, am lying in the womb of my mother by the arrangement of *maya* (illusion). O my Lord, when shall I be released from this confinement?”

To make the adjustment as easy as possible the newborn is protected from any intense sensory stimuli. This includes wind, strong sunlight, rain, loud or jarring noises, strong scents, hard surfaces, and sudden or excessive movement. Everything should be soft, warm, and nurturing. According to Vedic tradition the child does not even go outside until it is fourteen days old — a ritual known as *niskramana samskara*, where the father takes the child out under the sun and recites a mantra for its well-

being. Also, at three-months-old the child may be placed briefly at the feet of the temple deity for divine protection while receiving the priest's blessings and a sprinkle of holy water.

Three practices that enhance bonding with the baby are breastfeeding, massage, and "baby wearing." Modern medical research has established the benefits of breastfeeding over bottle-feeding. Scores of studies conclude that breast-fed babies have a lower mortality rate than bottle-fed babies, develop physical and mental milestones faster, and are less prone to dental decay and infections. Breast milk has seventy ingredients not found in bottled milk and is an important source of immune building antibodies. The baby is weaned onto solids once the first teeth appear. The first grains are given to the baby by a priest in a ceremony called *annaprasana*. After 56 days the baby can eat semolina soup which is prepared by soaking semolina in water overnight, draining the water the next morning and cooking the semolina with palm sugar and milk. Dried, seeded, and powdered green banana is also given with buttermilk as a digestive aid for the stomach. *Ragi* or red millet water, rice, and cow or goats' milk are also administered. Salt is withheld for the first six months.

Massage is integral to the mother/baby daily routine in India. It is particularly advantageous for premature babies. When premature babies are given daily massage they have gained more weight and left hospital stronger than those who were not massaged. Ayurveda advises that massage should take place in a warm, quiet room. Also, due to the delicate newborn's skin, a small dough ball should be used for massage in the first month. This can be made from atta flour and water, then rolled in a little boiled organic coconut milk, or sesame oil and turmeric. Baby massage enhances circulation, expels toxins, sharpens reflexes, aids digestion, reduces colic, and gives the baby a deep sense of security. By the second month, massage with boiled organic coconut milk or *lakshadi* oil is used, applying gentle hand strokes and incorporating some sensory-motor coordination exercises. Use light long strokes on the long bones, circular motions on the joints and gentle pressure in a clockwise

direction on the abdomen helps to expel gas. At two months, oil such as *brahmi* oil may be applied to the scalp, stopping the initial ghee pad placed on the crown fontanel from birth. This acts as a brain, neuromuscular, and hair tonic as well as preventing cradle cap. The massage can last from ten to twenty minutes and is best done at least thirty minutes away from feeding. If the baby suffers from colic a washer dipped in warm water and a pinch of hing can be placed over its abdomen for a few minutes at the end of the session. The massage may be followed by a bath and a sleep. Massage should be avoided if there are signs of fever or cold. Babies thrive from this tender touch and relaxing time with the parent. The ancient pediatric text *Kashyapa Semite* says massage is very important for the baby's neuromuscular and central nervous system development as well as for weight gain, pain relief, improving skin tone, sleep, vision, and digestion. Massage sessions also provide a mother or father with a unique opportunity for quality time with their baby. Though you can learn good techniques from Ayurvedic baby massage videos the best massage flows from love rather than method.

The expression "I slept like a baby" must have been coined by a parent fortunate enough to have mastered the art of "baby whispering." Indians have always used hammocks to lull their babies into a deep, cocooned slumber. These hammocks, now available in Western designs, are simple constructions of a spring hanging from the ceiling attached to a strong triangular frame from which a folded cloth hangs. The hammock is very comforting for the baby as it is like the womb environment with the snugly secure shape and the range of movements similar to sensations in utero. The baby's slightly slanted position also prevents reflux and colic. Conventional cribs being firm and flat don't provide the same swaddling comfort and can also lead to the baby developing a flat head. Babies also wake more peacefully in a hammock as its own movements initiate a reassuring bouncing action.

Another aid to sleep is music. Special songs act as sleep signals to the baby, triggering the relaxation response. A very effective style of music has been

developed from womb sounds by Dr. Schwartz, an intensive care doctor in Georgia, who found that the sound of blood flow in the placenta plus the mother's breath and heartbeat in the womb reaches the noise level of 80–95 decibels — almost as loud as a nightclub and suddenly stopping this music can be stressful to the child. So using sensitive microphones, Dr. Schwartz recorded the sounds in his pregnant wife's womb and added gentle music and women's voices. After seeing that this composition put his child to sleep immediately and for longer he played it to newborns who then spent an average of three days less in intensive care.

Babies can also be soothed if carried close and moved. Rather than straining the carer's arms and back a carrier can be positioned so it gives the mother good symmetrical back support and the baby is positioned diagonally or horizontally rather than vertically inside. The trend for vertical baby carriers is contrary to the Ayurvedic ideal that a baby should be kept horizontal or with its weight evenly supported along its spine whilst the backbones and muscles are developing. If the head is unsupported the sudden jerking position of the head whipping back when made to sit upright can cause neurological and muscular weakness, possibly linked to kyphosis (a weak back) and some osteopaths even suspect a connection with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Carriers that put pressure on the sacrum and force the baby's legs apart create an unnatural, stressful posture and are detrimental to the infant's musculoskeletal development. A baby sling holds the baby in a natural fetal position just as they were inside the womb. If comfortable, it is also the perfect position for breastfeeding and also allows the mother to carry out two-handed tasks while still comforting the baby. Slings are also helpful for babies who are slow to gain weight as they have been shown to gain more rapidly if carried in a sling for several hours a day, the proximity of the mother encouraging more regular feeding. Carrying a baby also reduces restlessness and colic and promotes cognitive development, motor skills and speech and builds a solid sense of security and self-esteem. The idea that infants who are

carried will become dependant and clingy later on is unfounded. Babies that are carried feel more confident to explore by themselves at a younger age, and as adults display less aggression and better relating skills. There are some good slings available, or you can make your own from a length of soft cotton approximately 5 meters long and 30 inches wide.

The Vedic culture has prescribed rituals and rites of passage at various phases of an infant's development. When the child has lived for a full lunar phase (28 days) this is celebrated by tying a protective yantra or blessed charm (*tali*) around the child's waist with a string (this may be changed to a gold chain after six months). Another auspicious item that may be used is an ornament which consists of five metals (*pancha-loha*). This is said to protect the child from malefic planetary influences. Also from the 28th to the 56th day after delivery a special ceremony called *dasandhya uzhiyal* is conducted for the child. At sunset the grandmother or mother offer a flame first to a lit lamp three times clockwise chanting "Hare Krishna" then to the baby three times. She then places the wick in turmeric and limewater, touching the water to the baby three times. Finally, the baby is fed a paste of calamus, *triphala*, gold, butter, *rudrakasham*, *chandana*, and *brahmi* water to boost physical and mental well-being.

The name giving ceremony, *nama-karana*, takes place some time after the baby's birth. In some traditions, the formal name is given when the child reaches six months. In the meantime pet names such as, "little goddess" and "little jewel" are used. This gives the parents time to observe the child's character in order to select a name that is really apt. In choosing the name an astrologer, priest, or guru may be consulted to ensure it has a beneficial sound vibration. An auspicious sounding name which is constantly repeated over the person's life then acts as a mantra, attracting positive energy into their life. The astrologer calculates the best first syllable and the family agrees on a name they like starting with that. For the three ways of ascertaining a name through astrology consult the do-it-yourself web page <http://jyotisha.ooit.com/bhava.htm>. Once the name is selected the uncle or father first whispers it into the child's right ear if it is a boy and the left ear for a girl. Only then may the name be spoken aloud.

The ear-piercing ceremony called *karna-dhana* samskara is performed by some castes on the sixth, seventh, or eighth month. A jeweler generally performs this nowadays. The first ear to be pierced is the right one for a boy and the left ear for a girl. This immediately induces a



Surya-Kanya Devi Dasi and her new born girl, Jahnava. (Radhadesh, Belgium, summer 2006)

cell-mediated response to boost the child's immunity, though the earrings may be taken out after a week if desired.

Because a baby's hair is considered too fine it is generally shaved off before six months to promote healthy thick re-growth. This ceremony called *mundana* may be conducted by a priest or barber. After shaving the hair a soothing balm of sandalwood and saffron paste is smeared over the head. This protects against infection and adds to the world's most sublime scent — a baby's head!

May we all appreciate these precious souls and the loving parents who hold the future in their hands. •

¹ M. Lukesch in T. Verny, with J. Kelly, "The Secret Life of the Unborn Child" New York: Summit, 1981, p. 49.

² R. Jevning, A.F. Wilson and J.M. Davidson, "Adrenocortical Activity during Meditation, Hormones and Behaviour," 10 (1978), pp. 54-60.

Raga Manjari Devi Dasi (a disciple of Bhakti Caru Swami) is a naturopath, homeopath, and Ayurvedic consultant who teaches and practices at Ayurveda Elements, Sydney.

www.ayurvedaelements.com.au

Herbal Help

How herbs can help medical problems

Raga Manjari Dasi and Rama Prasad Dasa
(Part 5 ; continued from the previous issue, No. 11/2005)

OVERWEIGHT

Ayurveda believes that a healthy weight is achieved when a person is healthy. There are no artificial standards for an ideal weight. People with a *kapha* constitution will naturally be a little heavier as a result of their slower metabolism, making them gain weight easily and lose it slowly. Weight gain is not always healthy, however, as it may indicate water retention, hypothyroidism, or *ama* accumulation. Whatever the cause, the focus should be on losing waste rather than weight. An ideal weight allows a person to access his or her optimal stamina, fitness and health. The weight of a waif-like model may be perfectly natural and effortless for a *vata*-type constitution, but is dangerously depleting for a *kapha* or *pitta* constitution. Carrying a bit of extra weight can promote greater longevity, providing a reserve to help counter the *vata* years of old age. Along with diet, exercise and mental attitude, Ayurveda has some powerful fat and toxin reducing herbs to facilitate weight loss. These include *triphala* (*amalaki*, *bhibitaki* and *haritaki*), Indian myrrh, *vidanga*, turmeric, fenugreek, ginger, *asana* and *acacia catechu*.

Lifestyle Changes

Overeating and under-exercising are the simple reasons behind most weight gain. Food can be abused as a tool to push down uncomfortable emotions. *Pitta* body types tend to overeat to suppress feelings of stress or frustration. *Vata* constitutions use food as a diversion from anxiety and fear. *Kapha* types commonly eat for comfort, or as a love substitute when lonely, depressed, or bored. The best way to overcome this automatic behavior is to be conscious of the underlying

emotional hunger that is being masked by physical hunger. Increasing awareness before and during eating by remaining silent, chewing well, breathing and eating away from diversions such as television, help one to focus on the body and mind's response to the process. If we avoid snacking, and eat a regular light breakfast, a substantial lunch and an early dinner it helps assist the body to digest food efficiently. Try to get a variety of foods, including all the six tastes: sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, salty, and astringent. Seeking alternative sources of energy and pleasure helps one to cultivate a taste for life, rather than trying to get it solely from food. Walking on the earth, soaking up some sun, breathing in ocean air, and pursuing an engrossing hobby can all help one to reduce the dependence on food for vitality and stimulation.

A fruit juice or vegetable fast one day a week can aid the liquefaction and elimination of toxins from the system. It can also help to normalize the metabolism and appetite.

A *kapha* diet is suitable for simple cases of weight gain. This suggests avoidance of animal fat, fried food, sugar, dairy, alcohol, nuts, and eating out.

Items that support weight loss include light, warm, bitter, pungent, and astringent foods. Some examples of these are apples, pears, pomegranates, cranberries, honey, beans, barley, corn, millet, buckwheat, rye, spices (except salt), asparagus, eggplant, green leafy vegetables, celery, and sprouts.

Drinking warm herbal teas with honey can help to cleanse the channels and allay hunger. *Pranayama* (breathing exercises) also stimulates proper digestion, assimilation, and elimination of meals.



Case Study

Dawn was a *kapha* body type and felt comfortable with her larger athletic build. Over the past year, however, she had gained weight and felt sluggish and bloated. Dawn followed a *kapha* reducing diet and took *triphala guggulu* before bed (a combination of ginger, gooseberry, *haritaki*, *bhibitaki*, and Indian myrrh). She also overcame long-term depression by joining the local water polo team and creating closer friendships.

Within 2 months Dawn was happy to reach her target weight and felt more energetic.

PMS

Women's cyclical nature is a constant reminder of their connection with nature's cycles, allowing them regularly to flush out mental and physical impurities. Research shows that during ovulation women are more outgoing, creative and energetic and whilst menstruating they are more introverted, hypersensitive, and intuitive. It is during this transition between ovulation and menstruation that premenstrual syndrome (PMS) tends to peak. The degree of PMS depends on the level of metabolic toxins (*ama*), organ weakness, and hormone imbalance in the body. The symptoms vary according to the *doshic* affected. *Vata* PMS tends to manifest as anxiety, lower back pain, insomnia, restlessness, constipation, gas with abdominal bloating and fluctuating energy. *Pitta* PMS may present with more anger, hunger, impatience, headaches, diarrhea, skin outbreaks and sweating. *Kapha* PMS often involves depression, weight gain, fluid retention, tender breasts, leucorrhoea, and sluggish digestion. It is best to follow the diet for the relevant *doshic* imbalance along with specific herbs. Herbs for *vata* PMS include nervine tonics such as *ashwagandha*, St John's wort, Indian myrrh, and evening primrose oil. Herbs for *pitta* PMS are vervain, nutgrass, aloe vera, passion flower, licorice, *brahmi*, and *shatavari*. *Kapha* PMS herbs are dandelion root, false unicorn root, dong quai, and ginger.

Lifestyle Changes

By improving the quality of life, the quality of the periods will also improve. As explained previously, the periods are dependent on all other biological mechanisms, making them inextricably reliant on the balance of all other bodily systems. A regulated, self-nourishing routine will help to harmonize our lives, which stabilizes the monthly menses. Healthy nutrition, sleep, exercise, rest, and recreation throughout the month will significantly reduce PMS symptoms. Foods to avoid include refined flour, sugar, caffeine, chocolate, cola, fried foods, animal fats, and eggs. Supportive foods are seeds, whole grains, dates, fresh vegetables, and fruit, apricots, split mung dal soup, fennel, black strap molasses, licorice, cumin, and chamomile tea.

Self-massage helps to calm the nervous system, and promotes the flow of hormones out of the body. Essential oils that can help with PMS are chamomile, lavender, geranium, rosemary, clary sage, rose otto, sandalwood, lotus, fennel, vetivert, jasmine, and ginger.

Reducing one's work and social schedule at this time relieves the body and mind of extra stress. Yoga postures for periods and guided relaxation are also highly beneficial.



Case Study

Ursula suffered from *kapha* type PMS a few days every month. She felt bloated, depressed, and retained water. Ursula followed a *kapha* diet with the specific PMS restrictions. She also took an infusion of dandelion root, ginger, long pepper, pepper, and cumin. A tincture of dong quai helped with the depression, and B complex with extra B6 reduced the water retention. Baths with Epsom salts and myrrh essential oil also reduced bloating. For an energy boost she would also occasionally take panax ginseng. •

(to be continued in the next issue)

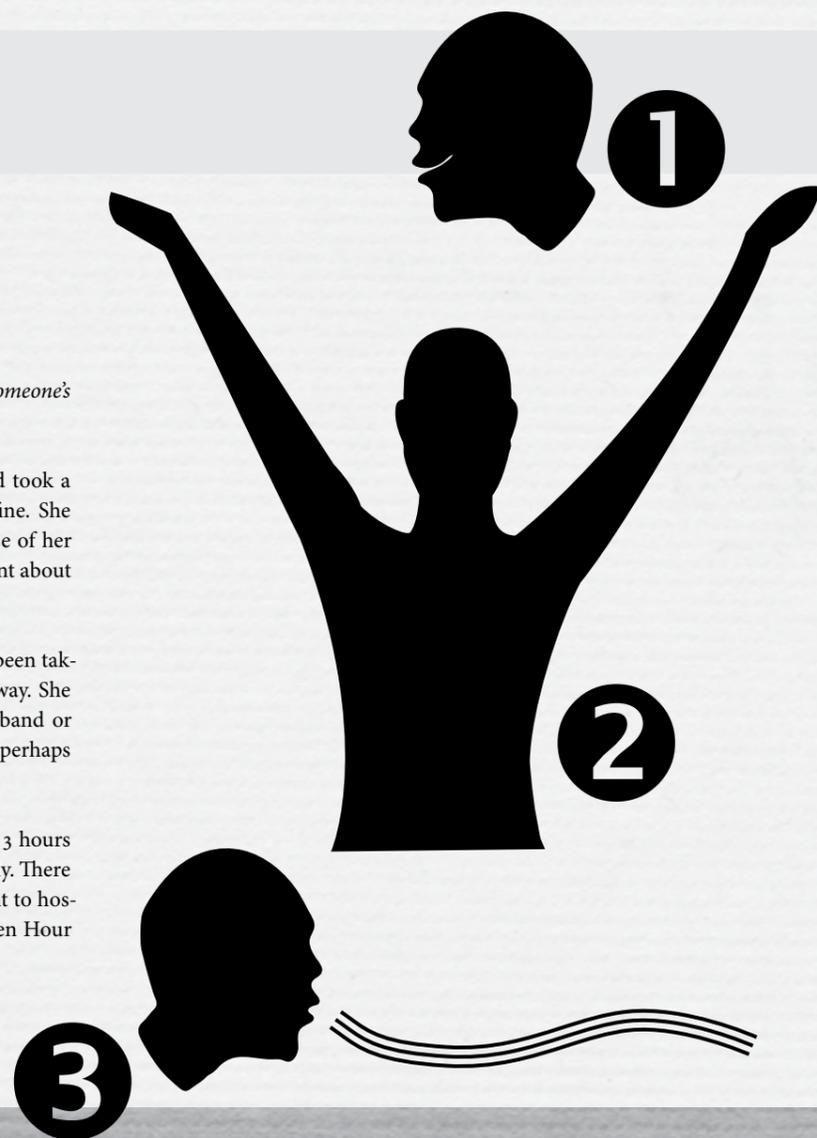
Strokes

The following information may help you to save someone's life.

During an outdoor dinner a friend stumbled and took a little fall — she assured everyone that she was fine. She said that she had just tripped over a brick because of her new shoes. While she appeared shaken up, she went about enjoying the rest of the evening.

Later, her husband called saying that his wife had been taken to the hospital — soon after that she passed away. She had suffered a stroke at the dinner. Had her husband or friends known how to identify the signs of a stroke perhaps she would be alive today.

If a neurologist can get to a stroke victim within 3 hours the effects of a stroke can be totally reversed. Totally. There is nothing more life saving than getting the patient to hospital in the first hour. This is known as The Golden Hour to doctors and emergency attendants. •



Recognizing a Stroke

To realize that a person has had a stroke can often be difficult. This lack of awareness spells disaster — the stroke victim can suffer brain damage or death when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms. Doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

1. Ask the individual to **SMILE**.
2. Ask him or her to **RAISE BOTH ARMS**.
3. Ask the person to coherently **SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE** (e.g. "It is sunny today").

If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call emergency services immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

After discovering that a group of non-medical volunteers could identify facial weakness, arm weakness, and speech problems, researchers urged the general public to learn these three questions.

Crushed Bugs in Food

Cochineal and Carmine

Some people don't know that things like ice cream or lipstick might contain extract from crushed bugs. On purpose.

In America, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed requiring food and cosmetic labels to list cochineal extract or carmine if a product's ingredients include either cochineal and carmine (red dyes that have been extracted from the ground bodies of an insect since the time of the Aztecs).

Release of the proposed rule came after the FDA received 35 reports of hypersensitivity to the colorings. A 1998 petition by the Center for Science in the Public Interest asked that the FDA take action.

The widespread use of the dyes in everything from yogurt to lipstick hasn't exactly been well-disclosed: The ingredients typically are listed as "color added" or "E120," the FDA said.

Carmine puts the red in ice cream, strawberry milkshake, fake crab and lobster, fruit cocktail cherries, and port wine cheese, according to the FDA. Carmine is also used in lipstick, make-up base, eye shadow, eyeliners, nail polishes, and baby products, the agency said. Meanwhile, cochineal extract shows up in fruit-drinks, sweets, yogurt and some processed foods.

That can upset vegetarians, Jews trying to keep kosher, and anyone who might blanch at learning their blush is made from bugs.

Not that this stuff hasn't been around long: Indians living in pre-Columbian Mexico were the first to recognize a cactus-sucking insect called the *Dactylopius coccus costa* was a good source of dye.

Now, like then, cochineal extract is made from the dried and ground bodies of the female insect. Carminic acid gives carmine its dark purplish-red color.

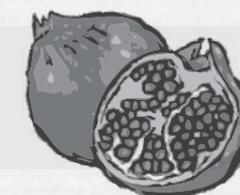
The FDA ruled out banning the use of the colorings since it found no evidence of a "significant hazard" to the general population. It also declined to require that labels disclose the colorings are made from insects, as the Center for Science in the Public Interest had asked.

"Why not use a word that people can understand?" said center executive director Michael F. Jacobson. "Sending people scurrying to the dictionary or to Google to figure out what 'carmine' or 'cochineal' means is just plain sneaky. Call these colorings what they are: insect-based."

The FDA said comments on the proposed rule were due April 27, 2006. The FDA plans to tackle the labeling of prescription drugs that include the colorings in a separate rule. •

Pomegranate Juice

"can slow prostate cancer"



Drinking a daily eight-ounce glass of pomegranate juice can significantly slow the progress of prostate cancer, a study suggests. Researchers say the effect may be so large that it may help older men outlive the disease. Pomegranates contain a cocktail of chemicals which minimize cell damage, and potentially kill off cancer cells. The study, by the University of California in Los Angeles, appears in the journal *Clinical Cancer Research*. There are many substances in pomegranate juice that may be prompting this response.

Previous research had indicated that pomegranate juice could have a beneficial effect on prostate cancer in tests on mice. But the latest study has shown that humans can potentially benefit too. The UCLA team focused on 50 men who had undergone surgery or radiation treatment for prostate cancer — but had shown signs that the disease was rapidly returning. The presence of prostate cancer cells is monitored by measuring levels of a chemical they produce called prostate-specific antigen (PSA).

The researchers measured how long it took for PSA levels to double in individual patients — a short doubling time indicates that the cancer is progressing quickly. The average doubling time is about 15 months, but in patients who drank pomegranate juice this increased to an average of 54 months. Some men on the study continue to show suppressed PSA levels after more than three years, even though they are receiving no treatment apart from drinking pomegranate juice.

Lead researcher Dr Allan Pantuck said: "I was surprised when I saw such an improvement in PSA numbers. "In older men of 65–70

years, who have been treated for prostate cancer, we can give them pomegranate juice and it may be possible for them to outlive their risk of dying from their cancer. We are hoping we may be able to prevent or delay the need for other therapies usually used in this population such as hormone treatment or chemotherapy, both of which bring with them harmful side effects."

Pomegranate juice is known to have anti-inflammatory effects and high levels of anti-oxidants, which are believed to protect the body from damage by particles called free radicals. It also contains isoflavones which are believed to play a role in cancer cell death. Dr Pantuck said, "There are many substances in pomegranate juice that may be prompting this response. We don't know if it's one magic bullet or the combination of everything we know is in this juice. My guess is that it's probably a combination of elements, rather than a single component."

Chris Hiley, of the Prostate Cancer Charity, said more work was needed to firm up the findings. She said: "It may well turn out that pomegranate juice has a wider application than just delaying disease progression in men with prostate cancer who have already been treated. It might also help as a reassuring low-key intervention for men whose cancer is being monitored rather than treated." Dr Laura-Jane Armstrong, of the charity Cancer Research UK, said: "If the results of this study can be confirmed, it could have important implications for prostate cancer patients, especially by delaying the use of other more aggressive treatments that can have debilitating side effects." •

Health and Safety Considerations for Devotees

Ananda Dasa



We are liable for the health and safety of the devotees and guests who eat and do service in our temples.

Devotees have been badly burned in kitchen fires. Every temple should offer training in emergency procedures. Devotees should occasionally have a fire drill and know which exit they are to take in case of a fire. Every kitchen should have fire extinguishers, and devotees should know how to use them. They should also know that if a fire cannot be put out in thirty seconds they should get out of the kitchen and call the fire department. In two minutes a fire can reach a dangerous stage.

Saris and dhotis worn in the kitchen should be tightly secured, so that draping folds or loose portions cannot catch fire if one turns around quickly or becomes inattentive. A devotee was once alone in the kitchen when my wife walked in, just in time to alert her that the corner of her sari had ignited on a flame as she turned to reach for a pot; she was unaware that her clothing was on fire. She may have been engulfed in flames, had my wife been seconds later.

In case of fire people should stop, drop, and roll. Rolling on the floor puts out a fire on clothing before it has a chance to spread. Or one can immediately remove a dhoti or sari. False modesty will not help one avoid serious burns.

A large box of baking soda should be available to douse fires that start in a pot. The flames can also be smothered with a lid. Procedures like this should be reviewed so that they will be followed without thinking in an emergency. One should not pour water on a grease fire, as that will cause it to spread. Hot oil or ghee must be handled with great care. No one should put a pot of ghee on a flame and then leave the kitchen to fetch something.

Loose clothing is dangerous. Silk is highly flammable, so it is not a good idea to wear it in the kitchen and on the altar. One devotee's silk chaddar caught fire from a ghee wick, and he died from his burns. Several devotees in Vancouver temple were burned when flammable aprons caught fire. Devotees sometimes dance with chaddars or *palloos* flying dangerously close to the ghee lamp being passed about. There must be fire extinguishers in the pujari room, temple room, and close to the altar. The temple commander could be trained in basic safety and first aid and be responsible for teaching safety rules.

Another issue is overheating. Poorly ventilated kitchens with six gas burners and an oven going full force in the summer can be a venue for heat stroke. Devotees should know the signs of overheating and the methods of preventing and remedying it. Drinking two glasses of water before going into the kitchen can help. A devotee once pulled a lady with potential heat stroke out of the kitchen, rinsed her head with cold water, and put her into a cold shower. It took ten minutes for her body temperature to normalize.

Another danger is slips and falls. Kitchen floors can be dangerously slippery. Non-slip kitchen shoes or floor surfaces can help. Do not use a lot of water to clean the floor because it takes a long time to dry. Besides, water and grease attract roaches. If counters, sinks, and floors are dry, roaches will find the kitchen to be like an unattractive desert.

Regarding leaving *prasadam* on a counter — hot food should be kept hot and cold food should be kept cold. Anything left out attracts flies, wasps, and ants. In a few hours bacteria begin to multiply. Cooked rice, if not refrigerated or kept above 140 degrees F, develops unhealthy levels of bacteria. Avoid food poisoning caused by stale *prasadam*. Temples should have a separate refrigerator for *prasadam*. Or at least *prasadam* can be kept on a separate shelf of the kitchen fridge, clearly differentiated from unoffered food. Storing offered food on counters for long periods of time invites diseases and insects.

Devotees who have recently returned from India should not be allowed to cook until a certain quarantine time has revealed them to be free from parasites and diseases. Typhoid has a long incubation period and may not be detectible without a test. Also, hepatitis may not be obvious immediately.

Finally, raw milk should always be boiled three times. Milk-borne diseases are serious. Even milk from inspected cows can contain bacteria.

Feeding many devotees and guests makes us liable for their health and safety. A food-safety course should be taught to anyone cooking. Books on food safety are available in public libraries, and devotees should be guided by them. Our brahminical practices will help greatly but not completely. •

Dear Prahladananda Swami Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All Glories to Srila Prabhupada!

ISKCON Vladimir temple have received 10 issue of the latest Health and Welfare Magazine. I narrated the contents to the community after perusal. Devotees were especially enlivened to hear your Message from the Minister (it was succinct and pithy). Narration of the experience of Ayurvedic treatment by Kancana-valli Devi Dasi attracted a lot of attention, as well as Herbal Help and the news column.

Thank you very much for wishing us good health. We wish you success in your service.

Your servant,
Abhinanda Dasa GKG

Health care or Ugra Karma (continued from page 7)

Suicide

According to *sastra*, suicide postpones and intensifies *karma*. However, as stated above, Ayurvedic ethics allow *prayopavesha*, voluntary death by fasting. The patient making such a decision must declare it publicly, to distinguish the act from suicide committed privately in traumatic emotional states of anguish and despair, and to allow for family and religious community intervention.

Prayopavesha is allowed when the patient is unable to perform normal bodily purification, when death appears imminent and pain and suffering are extreme (such that mitigating them would entail loss of consciousness). *Prayopavesha* is gradual, and allows the patient to reflect and reconsider his or her decision. After due deliberation, voluntary fasting unto death should be undertaken as *sadhana* and with the support of a community of faith.

Autopsy, Dissection, Embalming

Invasive procedures performed on the physical body after death distress the departed *jiva*, unnecessarily postpone final disposition, and may affect family members negatively. For these reasons, Ayurveda understands that autopsies should be avoided unless required by law, and dissection of cadavers for the advancement of science is also discouraged. Embalming, or replacing the blood with a preservative fluid, is also contraindicated. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, embalming retards the decomposition of the physical body, promoting lingering attachment of the *jiva* for its deceased instrument.

Final Disposition

Cremation is the preferred system of disposing of cadavers and should be performed within 24 hours of death. Because of the accelerated decomposition of the body accomplished by fire, cremation thoroughly releases the *jiva* from any lingering attachment to the physical instrument. Burial is not recommended, except for infants and divine personalities.

I trust that the discussion of these principles and guidelines will assist all practitioners of Ayurveda to face these unavoidable ethical dilemmas with greater aplomb and certainty. Even those who do not share these Vedic perspectives may gain from the experience, as they will have had an opportunity to consider these issues before confronting them in clinical practice.

I pray that our patients will be better served. For in the words of Acharya Charaka: "Those who practice Ayurveda while holding compassion for all creatures as the highest duty have fulfilled their mission. They obtain supreme happiness."

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. •

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 —***

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